

A SIEGE BABY

BY JOHN STRANGE WINTER





A LOVELY SKIN,
soft and delicate face and hands obtained
by using

ROWLANDS' KALYDOR.

An Emollient Milk, which removes Freckles,
Tan, Redness, and Roughness of the Skin,
and soothes all Irritation of the Skin.
Bottles, 4s. 6d.; half bottles, 2s. 3d.

ROWLANDS' ODONTO.

A non-gritty Tooth Powder; whitens the
Teeth, and prevents decay.

ROWLANDS' EUKONIA.

A Pure Face Powder, free from Metallic
poisons. In Three Tints—White, Rose, and
Cream. 2s. 6d. Sold by Chemists, and

A. ROWLAND & SONS, 20, HATTON
GARDEN, LONDON.

Protected by



Royal Letters Patent.

Southall's SANITARY TOWELS For Ladies

Indispensable to Ladies Travelling.

Sold at Cost of Washing only.

Supplied at 1s. and 2s. per packet of One Dozen, being the actual cost of Washing.

BY LADIES' OUTFITTERS, CHEMISTS, AND DRAPERS EVERYWHERE.

Metal Boxes have been introduced, which keep the Towels damp-proof and ready
for use at a moment's notice, under all conditions. These Metal Boxes are very con-
venient (packing in a small compass). Price 9d., 10d, and 1s. each. Post free from
the Manufacturers at 1s., 1s. 2d, and 1s 5d.; or, with a Dozen Towels in each, 2s.,
3s. 2d., and 4s. 3d. Please name this Publication.

SOUTHALL BROTHERS AND BARCLAY, BIRMINGHAM.

Wholesale Agents, SHARP, PERRIN, & CO., 31, Old Change; and STAPLEY &
SMITH, London Wall, London.

For PRIVATE PARCELS by Post securely packed, write to the Lady Manager,
17, Bull Street, Birmingham; this department being entirely managed by Ladies.

For protection against useless and injurious imitations, each Packet bears
the Signature of the Patentees.

DEPOT FOR FRANCE: W. J. ABLETT, 10, Rue d'Uzès, Paris.

NEW DRESS GOODS

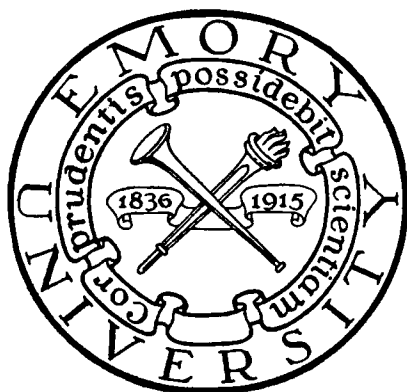
STRAIGHT FROM THE WEAVER TO THE WEARER.
FRESH FROM THE DARLINGTON LOOMS AT LOOM PRICES.

High-Class Weavings in Pure Wool for Ladies',
Children's and Gentlemen's Dress.

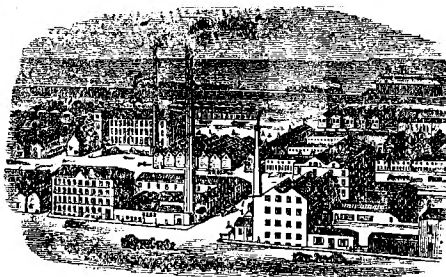
1000 PATTERNS FREE!

any Address, 

ROBERT W WOODRUFF
LIBRARY



These Splendid Goods are Sold direct to the Public without the intervention of Wholesale Merchants, Drapers, Agents, or Middle-men, all Intermediate Profits being given to the Purchaser.



gton S CS

ATED

SERGES,
CASHMERES.
nce, thorough money value,

**ITER HOSIERY, AND UNDER-
GREAT VARIETY.**

**"N" COSTUME
CLOTH.**

R COSTUMES.


ANY LENGTH CUT.

Any Article not approved will be changed within Seven Days.

All Goods are warranted to be equal to the Samples.

**CARRIAGE PAID
on all ORDERS**

to any Railway Station in Great Britain.

 All Orders are executed the same day as received.

Allen & Hanbury's "Perfected" COD-LIVER OIL

Can be borne and digested by the most delicate—is the only Oil which does not repeat, and for these reasons the most efficacious kind in use. In Capsuled Bottles only, at 1/4, 2/6, 4/9 & 9/-. Sold Everywhere.

NOTE PARTICULARLY.—This Oil is *NEVER* sold in bulk and cannot be genuine unless in the Capsuled Bottles bearing Allen & Hanbury's Name and Trade Mark (a Plough).

N.B.—ALLEN & HANBURY'S guarantee the purity and high quality of their Perfected Cod Liver Oil, which is made by a new and special process of their own, and is supplied direct from their Factories, at Longra and Kjerstadt on the coast of Norway.

BYNIN LIQUID MALT forms a valuable adjunct to Cod Liver Oil, being not only a highly concentrated and nutritious Food, but a powerful aid to the digestion of all starchy and farinaceous matters, rendering them easy of assimilation by the most enfeebled invalid. BYNIN being liquid, is entirely free from the inconvenient treacle-like consistence of ordinary Malt Extract. It is very palatable, and possesses the nutritive and peptic properties of Malt in perfection. It is a valuable aliment in Consumption and Wasting Diseases. In Bottles at 1s. 9d. each.

A S I E G E B A B Y

AND

OTHER STORIES.

A SIEGE BABY

AND

OTHER STORIES.

BY

JOHN STRANGE WINTER,

AUTHOR OF

“BOOTLES’ BABY,” “CAVALRY LIFE,” “ARMY SOCIETY,” “GARRISON
GOSSIP,” “IN QUARTERS,” “ON MARCH,” “PLUCK,”
“THAT IMP,” “MIGNON’S HUSBAND,”
ETC., ETC.

IN ONE VOLUME.

LONDON:

F V WHITE & CO.,

31 SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND, W.C.

1888.

EDINBURGH
COLSTON AND COMPANY
PRINTERS



CONTENTS.

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| I. A SIEGE BABY | 1 |
| II. THE FOOL OF THE REGIMENT | 54 |
| III. STAGE EFFECTS | 68 |
| IV. OUT OF THE MISTS | 90 |
| V. A REGIMENTAL PREACHER | 112 |
| VI. A WOMAN'S VALOUR | 135 |
| VII. BETTY | 144 |
| VIII. MISS HARKER'S REPUTATION | 165 |
| IX. WOODED IN JEST AND WEDDED IN EARNEST | 190 |
| X. BY THE POST-TONGA | 204 |
| XI. AN ATTRACTION | 225 |
| XII. CHILDHOOD'S MEMORIES | 243 |
| XIII. LIKE A GREEN BAY TREE | 259 |



A S I E G E B A B Y

AND

O T H E R S T O R I E S.

POPULAR NEW NOVELS.

Now ready, in One Vol., the Seventh Edition of
ARMY SOCIETY ; or, Life in a Garrison Town. By JOHN STRANGE
WINTER. Author of 'Bootles' Baby.' Cloth gilt, 6s. ; also picture
boards, 2s.

Also now ready, in cloth gilt, 3s. 6d. each.
GARRISON GOSSIP, Gathered in Blankhampton. By JOHN
STRANGE WINTER. Also picture boards, 2s.
IN THE SHIRES. By Sir RANDAL H. ROBERTS, Bart.
THE OUTSIDER. By HAWLEY SMART.
THE GIRL IN THE BROWN HABIT. By Mrs EDWARD KENNARD
STRAIGHT AS A DIE. By the same Author.
BY WOMAN'S WIT. By Mrs ALEXANDER. Author of 'The Wooing
O't.'
KILLED IN THE OPEN. By Mrs EDWARD KENNARD.
IN A GRASS COUNTRY. By Mrs H. LOVETT-CAMERON.
TWILIGHT TALES. By Mrs EDWARD KENNARD. *Illustrated.*
SHE CAME BETWEEN. By Mrs ALEXANDER FRASER.
THE CRUSADE OF 'THE EXCELSIOR By BRET HARTE.
A REAL GOOD THING. By Mrs EDWARD KENNARD.
CURB AND SNAFFLE. By Sir RANDAL H. ROBERTS, Bart.
DREAM FACES. By the Hon. Mrs FETHERSTONHAUGH.
A SIEGE BABY. By JOHN STRANGE WINTER.
MONA'S CHOICE By Mrs ALEXANDER. Author of 'The Wooing O't.'

F. V. WHITE & Co., 31 Southampton Street, Strand,
London, W.C.



A SIEGE BABY.

CHAPTER I.

IN the merry month of May 1857, three bright-faced girls were sitting close together in the morning-room of an English country house. They were very busy stitching as if for dear life, for their work was destined to begin a long journey before another week had gone by, a journey to the shining East, whither another daughter of the house had gone as a bride a little more than a year previously.

It was fine and dainty work with which they were occupied. Maude was putting the finishing touches to a gown made of flimsy cambric and delicate lace, tucked and embroidered until my brain aches to think of it, a gown with a very long skirt and a very small body ; while on the

other side of the window, Grace was just finishing a little shirt, which in size was a match for the body of the gown; and Kate was putting a beautiful patch of silk embroidery on the corner of an article which, I am told, is called a head-flannel.

Upstairs, a large box was already packed and awaiting these and some few other additions to its contents ere it set off on its travels—and over in Muttrapore, the object of all this affectionate forethought was just beginning to eat her dinner.

She was quite a girl and very pretty, with fair hair hanging in soft curls on either side of her round young cheeks, and her blue serene eyes. She was wearing a muslin gown of pale pink colour, with white lace about the slightly opened throat and within the wide sleeves.

She ate her soup in silence, which was not broken by her husband on the other side of the round table. Twice she looked at him in wonder, as if it was an unusual thing for him to be so quiet.

“Is anything the matter, Charlie?” she asked at last.

He looked up with a start.

“Oh! No, my darling, what made you ask?”

“Nothing, only that you have been so long without saying anything,” she answered.

“I am tired, that’s all,” he said. But he said it with an effort, which did not escape a pair of

glittering black eyes which were watching his every movement and expression. "What have *you* been doing to-day?"

"Lady Marjory came over just after you went this morning—and brought the baby. Such a dear little thing, and takes notice already, Charlie. Yes, it does indeed, for it opened its eyes and fairly laughed at me."

"You don't say so," he said, with a very fair show of interest. "And how is Lady Marjory?"

"Oh, wonderfully well. And, Charlie, she declares that there is no such blessing in India as to have a baby—it gives one such an occupation. I"—with a blush and a downward look—"shall be *very* glad when September comes."

"And I," said he heartily.

"And I had letters from the girls too. The box is to start about the middle of this month. And it will contain everything I can possibly need for—September."

"That's awfully good of them."

"Yes, isn't it? And poor Maude says it is so hard not to have the baby there. You know I told them I should send a portrait home as soon as possible, but Maude says what's the good of a piece of glass, with a sort of ghost on it that won't 'walk' unless you look at it sideways."

She paused, expecting he would laugh at the little joke; but no, he was as silent as the grave, and as grave as a judge.

"Charlie, I'm *sure* something's the matter," she declared positively.

He looked up quickly and answered promptly enough, "Nothing my dearest, you are very fanciful to-night. I am tired and hungry, that is all. Don't mind me at all, but tell me the home news."

Nothing the matter! Perhaps not—and yet an hour later he asked her to play a game of draughts with him, and then keeping his eyes fixed upon the closed door, he took her hand and said in a very low voice. "Eva, can you hear some news in silence?"

"News!" with a startled air, yet in a whisper, just as he had spoken.

"Yes, in silence and without a sound?"

"I think I can," she said confidently.

He held her hand yet tighter within his.

"Call up the heart of your ancestors," he said with a sad smile, then leant forward and whispered in her ear, "*It is come at last—they have risen at Meerut.*"

Mrs Mordaunt half rose from her chair, then remembered herself and sat down again; she looked up into her husband's face with eyes full of fright and put her disengaged trembling hand into his.

"Risen!" she repeated. "Oh, Charlie, what will it mean for us?"

"My darling, I cannot say, only—I wish I had died before I brought you out here, I wish I had died first."

"Oh, no—no—I don't. I daresay we shall be safe enough. As Lady Marjory says, it's not as if we were in a Native regiment. We might be uneasy then," reassuringly.

"Did she say that?"

Mrs Mordaunt nodded in reply.

"When?" he asked.

"This morning."

"What, aloud?" anxiously.

"Oh, yes. I couldn't get her to stop. She paraded about the room and laughed the whole idea of a rising to scorn—said she should believe it when it had come and not before. 'It's common sense,' she cried, "that such a thing couldn't be. Why should anybody want to mutiny, or at least to massacre us? If—but it's absurd,' she said; 'what man on earth could want to harm two poor inoffensive little women like you and me? It's absurd on the very face of it.'"

"Little fool!" said Mordaunt contemptuously.

There was a slight noise at the door and instantly their hands parted, and moved back to the position for playing the game in which they were supposed to be interested.

"Your move," said Mordaunt.

So she moved a piece—at random, and her husband followed her, and so they played on in silence until the servant who had brought in coffee left them alone again.

"I wish you were at home, Eva!" he burst out in a whisper of agony.

“So do I—with you,” she whispered back.

“With or without me—if only you were safe. If only I could get you away into peace and safety! It will come to us before long, and even if you are safe, I am afraid for the effects of excitement upon you just now. Oh! if I could only take you home.”

She shook her head sadly. “No use, Charlie, in wishing it. I am here, and must stop here. I am not the least afraid, though your news startled me for a moment. Besides, a good deal may happen before September, you know; all this trouble may be smoothed over and done away with long before then.”

“Yes, that is true—that is true. What a pluck my darling has!”

“Your darling loves you,” she said, very softly, “and God will do all the rest.”

That was the secret of her pluck—“God will do all the rest!”

CHAPTER II.

THEY were heavy and anxious days which followed the arrival at Muttrapore of the news of the outbreak at Meerut. And they were days of silence—silence so carefully observed that men conveyed meaning by looks, and made the centre of the deserted barrack-square their place for discussing the times when discussion was absolutely necessary; that the wives kept away from each other's houses lest they should betray their anxiety and fear; that morning-rides and evening band were the only entertainments which kept up a semblance that all was well.

In the entire station there were but two Europeans who were not impressed by the gravity of the dangers which surrounded them and which each hour drew nearer and nearer to them. Those two were Jack Farquhar, of the Black Horse, and his lovely little wife, Lady Marjory.

But their careless indifference to danger did not last long. For a week or two they went on as gaily and as unconcernedly as if they were spending a winter in Cannes, or a season in Town; openly laughing at the fanatical hatred

of the natives for the rule of the Feringhee as if it was a joke; acting like a pair of fools, as every one said, because she, poor little soul, was so proud of his stalwart size and strong arm and he so proud of his little wife's pluck and courage.

And then—ah me! it makes the bright spring day seem dark as I write about it—there came an awful night, when the smouldering fires of hatred and discontent, needing but a breath to fan them into flames whose lurid glare would light the whole world with horror, burst out into life and fury, so that the very gates of hell seemed to be flung open upon the handful of British soldiers and residents: and the first to fall before that cruel wave of murder was the one who had feared it least—Lady Marjory Farquhar.

Her death was the first outrage, but alas! it was not the last. Oh! they were fearful times—times when men stood shoulder to shoulder, hand to hand, foot to foot, ready and anxious to dare all for the sweet wives they had brought into a land of exile, and for the tender babes who were their nearest and dearest upon all the earth.

The garrison at Muttrapore was very weak, for part of the regiment—not at that time up to its full strength owing to sickness among both officers and men—had been sent off to succour a still more weak and defenceless station nearer

to Meerut by ten or twelve miles, and at which there seemed every probability of a rising earlier than at Muttrapore. Still the men were desperate and the women were brave, and they held their own and fought for their lives with an obstinate passionate strength which any Eastern enemy would have found irresistible had it not been for the aid and help of another foe (more silent than English caution, more insidious than the work of an eastern mine-layer, more powerful in its relentless selection than he who won for himself a reputation stained crimson with the blood of helpless women and innocent babies, whose name will be uttered with accents of execration and loathing as long as the English language lasts and is spoken—Nana Sahib, Rajah of Bithoor), the silent, insidious relentless enemy which we call "Pestilence."

It thinned the ranks of that devoted band—taking a strong man here, a brave nurse there, or a little child unable to fight against sudden hardships and privations—until they stood no longer shoulder to shoulder, no nor yet even within touch of one another; and yet they fought on, on until "stormed at by shot and shell," they could hold their shattered and blazing defences no longer and found themselves with no course open to them save to make a dash for the open and try to reach the rest of their comrades at the station ten miles in the direction of Meerut.

Up to this point Mordaunt's courage had not forsaken him, nor yet his hopes. His wife had borne the horrors, terrors, and privations of a close siege better than might reasonably have been expected, all things being considered; but when it came to an attempt to get ten miles across such a country through the very heart of the rebel army—why he just sat down and hid his face in his hands and wished to God that he had died before ever he was born.

Still even such a wish as that did not help him—or her—in the least; there was no other course for them to take, the attempt had to be made and they must make it with the rest. But oh! how the man dreaded it, dreaded it, it would be hard to say—and it was in vain that his wife roused all her scanty stock of failing courage, and bade him cheer up and hope for the best.

“Don't worry so, Charlie,” she said, a few hours before the start was made. “I think it will be all right; I think we shall get there. It's only ten miles; and after all, what is ten miles? A mere nothing—I've walked twenty many a time.”

“But not now,” he said in a tone of anguish; “and never in an Indian jungle.”

“Perhaps it won't be all jungle, Charlie,” she suggested.

“No—” he was going to say “Perhaps some of it will be swamp,” but he broke the words off just in time. “If I could only carry you all the way there, my darling,” he cried.

"We'll see what you can do if I get *very* tired, Charlie," she said gently, with which he was compelled for the time to be content.

About an hour after this, while he with all his comrades were waiting anxiously for the thick darkness which would permit their flight from behind their defences, he felt a light touch upon his arm, and turning quickly, saw the dark face and gleaming eyes of his bearer, by name Majid. "What is it?" he asked, his thoughts flying to his wife at once. "Is anything wrong? Does the Mem-Sahib wish for me?"

"No, Sahib," the man answered; "the Mem-Sahib is sleeping peacefully—but I wanted a word with you, Sahib."

"Well?"

"I have been arranging a way of resting the Mem-Sahib if she grows very tired," he explained, and then displayed a light hammock secured at the ends by stout ropes, one of which he passed over his shoulders, handing the other to his master. "If I take one rope and you the other, Sahib, it will make it much easier for the Mem-Sahib."

"But—" exclaimed Mordaunt in astonishment, "do you prefer to go with us?"

"Yes, Sahib, I am going to see my lady into safe hands," said the man quietly.

A flash of memory came back to Mordaunt's mind of the times—many of them—that he had chaffed his young wife for her extreme polite-

ness to the principal servants of the establishment. And then he remembered how once Majid had cut his arm rather badly, and that she had insisted on his going to the doctor and had inquired kindly after the hurt each day until it was healed and well ; now he realised the value of her kindness.

“Thank you, Majid,” he said gratefully and with a rush of feeling which, man-like, he was most careful to hide.

And about an hour and a half later a forlorn and well-nigh hopeless band filed out of the sheltered defences, and creeping between two rebel pickets, got without accident or alarm into the open country.

“Never thought I should live to turn tail in this way,” growled one soldier to another as they passed out.

But the man to whom he spoke did not reply, only folded his arms closer about the little tired child which lay sleeping upon his breast ; if he had spoken he probably would not have called the better part of valour “turning tail.”

Of necessity their progress was very slow and wearisome—they had no horses, or even so much as a “tat” among them, all the animals being stolen or dead long ago. Bravely the woman-folk bore up, several plodding steadily on in silence, nerved up to fulfil the task they had set for themselves—that of saving the dear wee tots they carried in their arms—while the older

children struggled on beside them, each carrying a basket or bag of such provisions as they had to bring.

But before they had covered half a mile poor Mrs Mordaunt's strength gave out and she was fain to admit that she could go no further.

"Don't mind me, Charlie, you go on with the others," she begged faintly.

But Mordaunt had managed to bring a flask of brandy with him, the last of a precious store which had done good service during the long siege. He put a little to her lips and beckoned to Majid to bring his hammock, and then they went on once more, contriving somehow to get slowly on, though it was exhausting and very weary work, stumbling through the long grass and jungle four or five feet in height, soaked through to the skin by the heavy dews, taking each step in fear of the enemy and with a yet greater dread of snakes and other vermin of the jungle; and by some means, perhaps because of the black darkness of the night, perhaps because of the delay in getting the lady into the hammock, they missed the track taken by their party and found themselves—a little group of three—in the very midst of what was to the Europeans an unknown country swarming with rebels one and all anxious for the life's-blood of any Feringhee who might happen to fall in their way.

They could not get into any village before

daybreak, which found them close to a grove of mango trees having a clear space in its midst. Here they hid themselves and rested all the day, only coming out at nightfall to push on once more.

"We are not far from a village," Majid said, as they prepared the hammock for the lady, "I think we shall reach it without much trouble, Sahib."

But, alas! before they had gone a quarter of a mile, Mordaunt slipped and fell, wrenching and bruising his knee badly.

"Can you get on at all?" asked his wife anxiously; "because I am not the least tired, Charlie, I can walk quite easily; I can, I assure you."

"Do you think you can? Then keep tight hold of Majid by the hand, for a fall might be a very serious matter for you," he answered, "and I will hobble after you as well as I can with a stick."

So they started once more. With swift sure footsteps Majid passed on, telling her in whispers where to tread and what parts to avoid, while Mordaunt struggled painfully after them, each step on the uneven ground giving his knee a fresh wrench which made him quiver with agony. Once or twice she insisted on stopping to ask how his knee was, if it was very painful and so on, but Mordaunt always resolutely and dauntlessly waved her on, never admitting that he was suffering much, and begging her not

to utter a word more than was absolutely necessary; so they went on until they came within sight of the village towards which Majid was pressing.

"Will the Mem-Sahib look over yonder? That is the village!" he said to her in a whisper.

With a look of joy she turned back to tell the news to her husband—but her husband was not within sight. They went back, but he was not to be found; they went to right and left, she utterly heedless of her weariness and prostration and remembering only that her husband was disabled and alone.

"Call!" she said to her guide.

So Majid called, as had been agreed between them before starting, with the note of a bird; but there was no reply—no reply save the ordinary voices of an Indian jungle after night-fall.

Mrs Mordaunt caught hold of the Bengalee's hand, her eyes staring piteously and her teeth chattering with fear.

"What has happened to him?" she wailed.

"Will the Mem-Sahib keep still?" the man entreated. "I cannot hear.

But he could hear nothing, not even though she braced herself to absolute silence, because there was nothing to hear.

"Majid, he is dead," she whispered.

But the Bengalee shook his head. "The Mem-Sahib must not think of that until we

know more. Listen ; if she gets to the village, Majid will put her into safe keeping and come back to find the Sahib."

"Must I stop there *alone*?" she asked, her natural fear gaining the uppermost hand for a moment. "Cannot I go with you?"

"Better not. I may have to go back a mile or more. But the Mem-Sahib will be quite safe for I know the village well."

So she consented to go back in the direction they had first taken, and in time they reached the village, where Majid was evidently known and very welcome. The villagers were one and all very kind to her, making her lie down and have her feet bathed, giving her native bread and rice, with milk to drink. And here Majid left her that he might go back and search for Mordaunt, whom he believed had slipped or stumbled in the long rank grass of the jungle and to be lying helpless and probably insensible.

But not a trace of him was to be found ; and not a little crestfallen, the Bengalee turned back and carried the bad news to the Mem-Sahib who, poor soul, was awaiting him in the direst suspense, and in agonies of fright lest she should be murdered by one or other of the dusky beauties who thronged round her as if she were a fat lady in a show at an English fair.

"The Sahib is not dead, or I should have found him," Majid assured her. "The Mem-Sahib must keep up heart, and when night

comes we must make for Budwra, where perhaps we shall find him."

"Where is Budwra, Majid?" she asked.

"Another village about three miles from here, and off the main road," he told her, "Perhaps one of my people has found the Sahib and has taken him on there."

"I wish it was night," said she, with a tired sigh, and set herself to watch for the fading of the day.

However, anxiety and fatigue notwithstanding, after a few minutes Mrs Mordaunt fell asleep, and slept with the sound and heavy slumber of one thoroughly worn out, fanned by a young native girl, to whom Majid gave a handful of pice for performing the office. Majid too cast himself down and slept soundly; and so the two lay there neither moving nor stirring until nearly sundown, when the old woman of the house, who had been gossiping at her door about the pretty Feringhee Mem-Sahib, suddenly rushed in and shook Majid into a sense of understanding, without ceremony or hesitation.

"Up, quick, quick!" she cried. "They are coming. Get the Mem-Sahib into that tope of mango-trees. Quick, quick! there is not a moment to lose! Save yourselves!"

It was but the work of a moment for Majid to drag the terrified Englishwoman into the grove of mango-trees indicated by the old woman, happily succeeding without being seen;

and there they hid themselves, cowering down and crouching low upon the ground amongst the rank grass and undergrowth, listening to the fiendish yells and shouts of the Sepoys, who were searching the little village for the Feringhee lady whom they heard had escaped in that direction.

But the dusk drew on, the last light of day faded away quickly—as it does in the East—and the Sepoys were obliged to give up the chase. Majid began to think of beginning the journey to Budwra, so bade her remain in the tope of mango-trees while he went back to the village for food and milk.

“But you won’t leave me, Majid?” she implored piteously, “you’ll come back?”

“Majid will never leave the Mem-Sahib until he leaves her in safety,” he said solemnly—he always addressed her thus.

So a very weary half-hour went by, during which she suffered a very martyrdom of suspense and dread. For she was wearing a dress which had once been of white cambric, and which even now, although it had been torn and stained and soiled by the adventures of the previous night and the hardships of nearly a week of the siege, showed very conspicuously against the dark background of the mango-trees. As well as she could, she hid herself among the grass, holding her skirts and breath with equal care, starting and shrinking at every sound, fancying

that the rustling of the leaves, the creaking of the bending branches overhead, the thousand and one sounds which one hears in a grove of trees after dusk, were the approaching footsteps of her murderers. And then, poor soul, when at length Majid returned, she mistook him altogether, and hiding her face upon her knees as she crouched there, gave herself up for lost, and made a feeble effort to say her prayers. But it was only the faithful bearer, who had brought her chupatties and boiled rice, with milk to drink. Besides this good meal he had also managed to get a quantity of long strips of cotton, with which he carefully bound and bandaged her feet and ankles so that she might tramp through the long grass and jungle with comparative ease ; and then they set off on their three miles' journey to Budwra.

CHAPTER III.

THREE miles is not a very long distance if it is looked at from our standpoint—that is to say, the standpoint of this the eighth decade of the nineteenth century. With rail or road in good order and at a convenient distance from our starting-place, a journey of three miles is a mere nothing ; nothing more than a matter of a few minutes. And if one is in tolerable health and well shod, why, it is not a very formidable distance as a walk : but as that frail woman went, on foot—in India, where climate and custom alike render walking exercise almost impossible—broken down in health and spirits—living in hourly, nay in momentary dread of a fearful and horrible death—sickened by direst suspense for the fate of him who was nearest and dearest to her of all the world—travelling, not by road or rail, not with cool and comfortable shoes and stockings on her feet, but lame and worn and weary, scarce able to keep a foothold, and yet afraid lest aught should go wrong with that other life so close bound up within her own—

oh, thinking of all this, doubt not that the three miles which lay between those Indian villages seemed to her a journey so difficult that it could never be accomplished.

But Majid cheered her step by step, steadying her faltering feet, and often keeping her from falling by sheer force of arm and will; and in her brave heart, fighting hard with anxiety and grief for her husband, were two great influences—the mother-instinct strong as life, and the absolute trust in God stronger than death. After all, it was only her poor suffering body that failed; her heart, never.

Yet they did not reach the village that night, for several times they had alarms of the mutineers being upon them; twice they lay for a long time behind a thick cluster of bushes and scrub, listening to them as they told with fiendish and exultant laughter of deeds of bloodshed and cruelty such as happily an imperfect knowledge of Hindustani prevented the lady from understanding in full.

But she had gathered a little of what they were saying, and, when they moved off, asked Majid anxiously if they had mentioned her husband, heaving a great sigh of unutterable relief when he told her no. And then, when the fright was over, they toiled on again, making but slow progress, for she was completely exhausted, and beyond the power of making any very great exertion; so when the day broke, it

found them still in the heart of the jungle, and not even within sight of village or road.

Here Mrs Mordaunt remained hidden under a broad-leaved bush while Majid pressed on to the village, in which there lived an old lady with a reputation for a knowledge of medicines and herbs, some to cure and others to charm. Fortunately for the preservation of the English lady's life, this old personage was a great aunt of the faithful Majid, and he her favourite relation, whom she received with extravagant expressions of joy and every demonstration of affection and pleasure.

As soon as her delight had subsided a little, Majid entered into the business which had brought him there, and on the whole a very pretty piece of work he had to persuade the old lady to take the Feringhee Mem-Sahib in and shelter her; for a more bitter hater of the European race could not, perhaps, have been found in the whole of India. But Majid's influence over the old dame—by-the-bye, she rejoiced in the name of Zee-Zeet—was unbounded, and after a short harangue he overruled all her objections, and made arrangements for bringing the lady in.

"But mind," she exclaimed, as a last warning, "it is only because she has been good to my favourite relative that I do this."

"Oh, yes, yes, to be sure," he answered. He knew if he once got her unperceived into his

aunt's house that the Mem-Sahib would be safe for any time that he thought it needful for her to hide there. For the festive Zee-Zeet had a reputation, which was spread very widely indeed in that neighbourhood, that it was always best to let her severely alone; and to such an extent did the superstitious inhabitants believe in the power of her charms and cures, that none ever ventured to approach her domicile without various preparations in the shape of propitiatory offerings, and only those who were pretty sure of being in her good graces dared venture to take so great a liberty as that.

Majid, therefore, with a well-satisfied heart, went back in search of his mistress, whom he found in what might be termed the last agonies of fright and weariness; being, poor soul, in that condition of body which made him determine to run all or any risks in order to get her into the village of Budwra by daylight, instead of waiting until the friendly shades of evening spread their sheltering arms above them.

And well it was for her—and for him—that he so made up his mind, for when at length they reached the safety of the old lady's hut, happily without much difficulty—though several times they were within an ace of running into the very arms of the Sepoys, and all Majid's skill was needed to avoid being seen by the other inhabitants of the village, which above all things he was most anxious to prevent—

Mrs Mordaunt's state was simply one of desperation, and that bitter hour which Charles Mordaunt had so feared and dreaded was fast stealing upon her.

To do her full justice, the festive old Zee-Zeet was wonderfully good to her during the twelve weary hours which followed, in spite of her hatred and loathing of everything belonging in any way to the Feringhee race; so the poor fugitive English girl came safely through her hour of trial, and in the thick darkness which immediately precedes an Indian dawn, a little girl-child first opened her eyes upon an anxious and woful world, wherein battle, murder, and sudden death ran riot.

CHAPTER IV.

WE are all of us more or less familiar with the awful story of the Mutiny of '57 as a whole,—how strong men dropped off their horses and died without so much as a struggle for life,—how women in the prime of life died of sheer fright,—how fever and famine thinned out the ranks of those who were still holding out against the cowardly foe who butchered little children and helpless babies in their merciless thirst for blood,—how the lives of all were in jeopardy every hour, and none who opened their eyes upon the dawn had any reasonable hope that they would live to see the sunset.

And yet that wee small fragment of humanity, born into the world two months before her time, frail as a snowflake, for whom there seemed to be no place and no room, lay close cuddled against her mother's breast, and throve almost like a mushroom on a moist September night after the warmth of a bright autumn day. Throve—ay, and throve apace; fed like a young calf; stared about her with wondering blue

eyes (at least, that was what her mother said they were) when she did not happen to be asleep, which was about four hours out of the twenty-four; twisted her very wrinkled and scarlet little face into the oddest contortions imaginable, and doubled a wee morsel of a hand into a fist (with the thumb *outside*) and sucked the first of the four knuckles with an energy which under the circumstances was neither more nor less than thoroughly astounding. But that was only now and then, for generally she lay sleeping the sweet and lovely sleep of babyhood, a dear, wee, velvet-skinned person, whose advent into the world had amply compensated for all the mother's suffering and privation, who allayed all her fears, and left no pain behind except the anxiety about her husband. If only her Charlie had been at hand she would have been perfectly happy, even though she had not a second frock in the world for herself nor a proper rag of any kind for the child, who was dressed in a strange arrangement of white cotton contrived by the festive Zee-Zeet.

“Dear good old Zee-Zeet”—as the little fugitive lady called her in the overflowing gratefulness of a tender heart, and her blessed ignorance of the fact that right willingly would the old lady have cut her throat and made witch-candles and other ghastly *articles de luxe* of her body—under the influence, or perhaps pressure, of her

nephew Majid, did more for her than bring the child into the world in safety. She cast about in the village for a wet nurse, and finding a young native woman, with a baby of a few weeks old just at the point of death, carried her off to her hut, and, after binding her down to secrecy with all the influence of her evil eye and her worse reputation, introduced her into the presence of the tiny heroine of this story. Lucky little heroine! The poor dark-skinned mother's torn and grieving heart went out to her at once, and she cuddled the little bundle of white cotton to her bosom and shed the last tears of regret for the one she had lost upon the blonde and velvet-like head of her new nursling. And after that, the little Feringhee lady and her baby had lack neither of attention nor of love.

For nearly three weeks all went well, and not a soul guessed who was so safely hidden within the sacred hut of the old lady with the evil eye. The villagers knew that Corah had gone there after losing her baby—but then Corah's lord and master was away, nobody quite knew where, being bearer to some great English Sahib who had gone up to the hills several months before. And as Corah was to be seen almost every day walking in some part of the village, and had evidently got over her trouble, it was nothing to anybody if Zee-Zeet chose to have her in her house or she to remain there. So for nearly

three weeks all went well and the small atom of humanity thrived and grew considerably. And then Mrs Mordaunt, never having heard a single word of her husband—not even though Majid went several short journeys in quest of him, or of some other English officer who could carry the news of his mistress's safety to the nearest British camp—began to fret and worry to be getting back to her own people once more.

Up to that time Majid had been afraid to take any expedition of more than two or three hours' distance from Budwra—fearing lest his old aunt's fanatical hatred should outweigh the power of his influence over her, and cause the betrayal of the English lady into the hands of the mutineers—but when the time had come for them to seize the first chance that Providence gave them of making a dash for the nearest British camp, he felt at liberty to leave her for longer periods, so that he might discover the whereabouts of the world, so to speak.

He made three of these pilgrimages before he hit upon any authentic information about the various garrisons in the neighbourhood; but when he went out for the third time he fell in with a half-caste who was friendly towards the Europeans, and who told him exactly how the land lay at that moment; who told him, too, exactly how to reach the garrison of Singkôte, and finally offered to carry a letter or message there for him.

Now Majid was a very wary sort of person, who

did not believe in disclosing the hiding-place of his mistress, whom he had brought safely through so much hardship and danger, to a half-caste who might or might not be as faithful as he made himself out to be, and who might sell her to the Sepoys, even if he did not take an opportunity of murdering her himself.

"You've been in the camp?" he said cautiously.

"Yes, I was there three days ago."

"Ah! Did you see any of the English officers?"

"Why, of course; all of them. I saw Clarke Sahib, and Gregory Sahib, and the Mem-Sahib; and I saw Moore Sahib and Mordaunt Sahib, too."

"Oh, you saw Mordaunt Sahib?"

"Why, yes—of course I did. Do you know him?"

"I've seen him," said Majid evasively. "What is he like now?"

"Oh, very well—he has got over his lameness."

"Was he lame?" asked Majid, with truly Oriental but admirable indifference.

"Yes, he was lame—got hurt in the jungle—lost his wife. Ah! that hurt him most."

"Ah! Well, if you are going near Singkôte to-morrow, you might turn in and tell Mordaunt Sahib that Majid is on his way to him with good news."

"I will. I owe him a good turn, and will do it."

And so the two parted, and Majid returned to the house of the lively Zee-Zeet, to prepare his mistress for good news and a move.

She was obliged, poor little woman, to have a nice comfortable cry over the baby's blonde head ; and then she tried hard to tell the good news to Zee-Zeet and Corah, who neither of them understood so much as a word she was saying, in spite of the fact that Corah was all sympathy with the tear-brimming, shining eyes ; Zee-Zeet didn't want to know, so the little Englishwoman made no impression upon her, therefore she had to content herself with whispering the wonderful news to the equally wonderful baby, who, poor mite, didn't even know it had a father, so was as unappreciative as the others had been before it.

And as soon as dusk fell a strange farewell was taken in the little hut, and the party set off. I say strange, because in those times it was strange, ay, more than strange, it was marvellous, to see a beautiful little fair-haired Englishwoman clinging to a hideous old native hag—I use that word advisedly—as if she loved her. Zee-Zeet was torn by the oddest mixture of feelings ; she hated anything and everything European with the fiercest and bitterest hatred imaginable,—the hatred which is born of strong religious feelings, and which may be seen even in this enlightened and Christian land, not between those who have chosen slightly different paths to the gate of heaven, but, alas for the precious example that lights us on our way, even between those of one Church, one Faith.

Thus the influence of "Deen" tore the old Bengalee lady one way, and the odd sensation of receiving real gratitude tore her another, so that it became very much a case of "pull devil, pull baker," and strange to say—although Zee-Zeet wouldn't have owned that it was so for the world—on the whole "baker" got the best of it. For Zee-Zeet knew, nobody better, that she rejoiced in a reputation which was the very reverse of desirable, being in fact just about as bad as it could be; she knew that not a single woman of her own race who had any knowledge of her at all would have touched her with so much as the tip of one finger, let alone have flung their arms around her and fairly hugged her as this little English lady did; she knew that not one man, woman, or child old enough to know the evil eye, would have lifted their eyes to hers, and yet this Feringhee Mem-Sahib fearlessly and smilingly looked straight into her face, and, somehow, a thought crept into her mind that, after all, the blue eyes of the Europeans were very pretty. And besides that thought there came also another, one which she entertained grudgingly and unwillingly enough, which was one of admiration and respect for the courage and pluck which feared neither hers nor anybody else's witchcraft in all the wide world.

There is no saying what the upshot of this mental struggle might not have been, if the old lady had not suddenly remembered that since

the Englishwoman had been an inmate of the house, several of her decoctions had "gone bad," and more than one of her charms had refused to work. Oh! what if this Mem-Sahib had an evil eye of greater power than her own! The very thought was enough to shrivel up the ancient dame with fear and horror, and caused her to hurry on the little lady's farewells with a zeal which was the reverse of hospitable.

Poor little Mrs Mordaunt was quite upset by this parting from one whom she credited with a kindness such as would have filled her own heart under similar circumstances, and set off on her perilous journey with a mist in front of her pretty eyes and a very inconvenient lump in her throat. As for Majid, he knew his distinguished relative well, and breathed with more freedom than he had done since he and the Mordaunts had set off in search of a haven of refuge together; for each day he had noted some sign or other of dissatisfaction or detestation on her very speaking countenance, and all along had been haunted by the gravest doubts lest in the game of "pull devil, pull baker," between her evil passions and his influence over her, "devil" would get the best of it, and the end which he had in view be defeated after all.

Well, they parted from the festive Zee-Zeet, leaving that estimable but superstitious old person in a state of the most abject fear; for Mrs Mordaunt just at the last took from her finger

a handsome ring set with a cat's-eye and two diamonds, and in token of gratitude for the safe shelter and care which she had given her, slipped it, with a very fervent blessing, on to the old woman's hand.

Zee-Zeet was frightened out of her five senses and all her wits. She firmly believed that the blue-eyed Mem-Sahib had cast some terrible spell around her. She regarded the thing itself with disgust and loathing, but she was afraid to take it off her finger lest she should find herself transformed into a wriggling snake or a water rat.

Meanwhile, Majid had taken the lead of his little party and they had passed safely out of the most frequented part of the village, unseen except by one small boy, who like Peeping-Tom of Coventry was spying about where he had but little business to be, perhaps seeking food for his mind, and who promptly went home to his mother and told her that he had seen three demons come from the house of Zee-Zeet, receiving in return advice to keep within doors and hold his tongue, while at the same time she could not by any means resist the pleasure of imparting the information to the potter's mother, who after the manner of womankind, no matter whether their complexions be brown or white, just mentioned it to the wife of the smith, who in turn told it to her husband, who passed it on to the astrologer, who by-the-bye hated Zee-Zeet with a righteous loathing, as an utterly unclean

but, alas, powerful thing, who was too many altogether for his fine science and study. And in turn the astrologer imparted the story—by this time distorted out of all likeness to its original form—to the Brahman, who happily did not in any way connect the tale with the Europeans, whom he hated as much as the astrologer hated the festive Zee-Zeet.

On the whole it was well for the Europeans of that district in general, and for Mrs Mordaunt in particular, that this young Hindu Peeping-Tom did happen to see the exodus from the old wise woman's house, for the villagers kept away from her, and she, haunted by the dread of the terrible influence of the cat's-eye ring, kept away from them, giving the fugitives an infinitely better chance of accomplishing their journey in safety.

On the whole they were singularly fortunate, for they fell in with no rebels for a fair part of the distance to Singkôte, and the inhabitants of the village through which they were passing (not, that is, the actual group of houses near which the hut of Zee-Zeet lay, but the whole district or *village* of Budwra), were, like most dwellers in an Indian village, of a totally different class to the malcontents who raised and continued the Mutiny, being peaceful and honest, and, with the exception of the Brahman, not troubling themselves much one way or the other about the Europeans who lived among them.

So for the first part of the day all went well.

Mrs Mordaunt trudged bravely on beside Majid, forgetting all but that her Charlie was at the other end of her journey, and that her wee blonde-haired mite was safe in Corah's arms just behind her. She could not help thinking as they pressed onward that she could never be sufficiently grateful to the merciful Providence which had watched over her during these past terrible weeks, which had brought her through her hour of pain and trial, had spared the life of her little frail infant even though she had come into the world two months before her time, which had preserved the life which was of most value to her on the whole earth, and which had raised up in the land of her enemies—the land reeking with every crime of which, alas, murder was neither the most dreaded nor yet the most common, reeking with the blood of women and helpless innocents—three such tried and trusty friends as Majid, Corah, and that dear old Zee-Zeet. Oh! if ever this awful rebellion was ended and peace and order reigned once more over the land, how Charlie should make it up to them for the trouble and expense and risk to which they had been put for her; oh! what cause they should have to remember the unprotected and helpless Englishwoman whom they had befriended. And then, dear little soul, plodding along with her tender heart flowing over with gratitude, she fell to thinking what she should be able to do for each—first there was Zee-Zeet,

the old darling, what should she be able to do for her? Bless her! Well, she didn't think somehow that Zee-Zeet was over and above well off. What then if she got Charlie to settle a nice little annuity upon her? say twenty or five-and-twenty pounds a year; that on the whole she should think would be better than any other form of thanks-offering, and then the old lady could make herself happy in her own way—which, as Mrs Mordaunt admitted somewhat ruefully to herself, as she remembered the exact circumstances of their parting, was a way that she hardly quite understood.

And for Corah? Well, of course there was Corah's husband to be considered. From all Majid had told her, she thought he must be a very good husband indeed, and evidently Corah was very fond of him. She didn't quite know what would be the best to do for them—something useful and substantial, of course; and here she turned round and refreshed herself by a good long look at the little blonde head lying against Corah's bosom—she just touched the child's cheek with her lips, fearing to wake it by a real kiss, and then she smiled up in the nurse's dusky face with a smile of seraphic trust and beauty such as is never seen save on the face of a good woman with a pure heart.

And then she went back to her dreaming, settling in her own mind how Charlie should reward the ever-faithful Majid. Ah! well, *that*

would be easily settled, for Majid had had a dream for a long long time, and the little woman had wormed it out of him during her durance in the house of Zee-Zeet.

For a well-born Bengalee it was, I daresay, when looked at from the standpoint of his compatriots and compeers, the desire of a most depraved taste; but you see, the little lady looked at the matter in quite a different light, and she thought Majid the most sensible and reasonable of men. As a matter of fact, his dream was to marry an Englishwoman and keep a tobacco bazaar, where he did not much care, except that he had been to England twice and had rather a fancy for Bournemouth, at which secluded and then very select spot he had passed the greater part of one winter.

So that would be very easy to manage. Charlie would mention him to the Government, and secure for him a full share of any rewards and honours which might happen to be going, and then faithful Majid should enjoy the fruits of his fidelity and the realisation of his fondest dreams.

At this point Majid, who had been surprised and delighted with the style in which she kept up the march, stopped the little party for refreshment, which consisted of some boiled rice and sweet milk, with some strong chicken broth for the lady, cold but good, which Majid had made during the afternoon and had put up in a bottle for her use on the journey. How she

enjoyed it, and munched nice little native cakes—chupatties—as they rested; and then, just as they were about to start, there was a rustling among the growth of the jungle, a trembling of the tall grasses to the left, and a terrified shriek, followed by the report of a gun and the falling of some heavy body headlong to the ground. For an instant Mrs Mordaunt did not know where she was, nor what she was doing, for it almost seemed to her as if Majid had unceremoniously knocked her down. However, when she came to her full senses, she found herself lying under a low-growing bush, with Majid lying beside her, and holding the branches on one side down upon them until they pressed upon the ground. In this way they lay hidden for two hours or more, listening to the coarse jests and quarrelsome talk of the band of rebel Sepoys which had thus sprung almost upon their very resting-place. Once only she spoke, whispering into his ear,—

“Where are Corah and the baby?”

“All right,” he answered, and so she lay very still, being perfectly satisfied.

Personally, Majid was very glad indeed of the opportunity thus afforded him of learning the movements of the rebels. Having shot the wretched fugitive who had fallen in their way, the Sepoys squatted themselves down upon the ground to discuss matters generally, and happily they just discussed those points upon which he

was most anxious to be informed. He learnt, among other things, that Singkôte was regarded as absolutely out of their power, the garrison being very strong, the health of the defenders very good, the defences impregnable, and ammunition and provisions inexhaustible. And he learnt also that the road to Singkôte was comparatively clear, a piece of information worth more to him a great deal than two hours' discomfort, delay, and a little cramp. Finally, the rebels moved off, leaving the coast clear, and presently, when he had made quite sure they were out of sight and hearing, he rolled out from under the bush and helped his mistress to her feet.

"Do not look to the left, Mem-Sahib," he said, wishing to spare her the sight of the poor dead white face of the man whose last shriek was still ringing in her ears.

Mrs Mordaunt trembled but obeyed him.

"It is not the Sahib?" she asked in an awful dread.

"Oh, no—it is a mere boy. Majid will take his watch and rings into camp."

He would have scooped a shallow grave for the poor boy, but the ground was hard and he had nothing with which he could dig—so he searched his pockets for any things by which he could be identified, and then put him as decently as he could under the bush where they had lain hidden.

And then Mrs Mordaunt, who had been peering curiously around, said suddenly,—

“Majid, where are Corah and the baby?”

The words had scarcely left her lips when a succession of piercing and agonised shrieks rang out upon the air in the direction which the rebels had taken. Then there was *dead silence!* The mother caught at his hand that she might steady herself, and together they listened intently; a few shouts and peals of derisive laughter rose upon the stillness of the night, and they too died away and all was quiet, quiet as the grave; the faithful native and the overwrought and half-fainting Englishwoman looked at one another—a desperate question shining out of the blue eyes of the mother—the wistful gentleness of profound and hopeless pity melting the black orbs of her protector.

CHAPTER V.

THE look in Majid's eyes was all too plain an answer to the question the mother's had put ; and as she realised that her child had fallen into the hands of the rebels, that almost beyond all possibility of doubt the piercing shrieks which but a few minutes ago had rent the air were the last cries of agony uttered by poor Corah, and that the dead silence which followed had been to her the silence of the grave, Mrs Mordaunt sank down upon the ground in utter and abject despair. For half-an-hour she stayed thus, crushed, hopeless, and so weary of life that it seemed useless to attempt to continue the struggle any further. A horrid nightmare seemed to possess her, and she sat swaying herself to and fro like a woman in a dream. Could it be possible that her little child who had come into the world with such difficulty, and yet, like a sweet flower growing up in a ditch, had thriven and flourished in spite of all the unlovely and unhealthful surroundings, was gone from her for ever? That she was not only gone, but to a violent death ; for oh ! there was no hope of

mercy from the wretches who had shot down the poor lad who was lying still and silent under the bushes but a yard or so away from her as she sat! Oh! why, why had not the little life ebbed away in peace at the old woman's hut? Why should it have been spared only for such an end as this? It was surely too cruel, too hard, that if she ever found herself in her Charlie's arms again, she should only be able to *tell* him of the little child—his own—whom he had never seen; that if they should escape the perils of this horrid country and live out the rest of their lives together, there would be a leaf in her life which would have no part in his, a leaf turned down and never to be read again until they should read it together in eternity.

And then—oh! who but God Himself rent the thick clouds asunder and let a flood of joyous and hopeful light into her soul?—and then a remembrance came back to her of the words she had spoken to her husband the night they had first heard the news of the outbreak at Meerut—"God will do all the rest, Charlie." Yes, God would do all the rest. Oh! what had she been about not to have had a stronger faith, a greater trust! Surely, she was not the one whose faith should be small, she who had been brought through so many and great dangers, who but that very day had heard the blessed and joyous news of her husband's safety, the dear husband whom for three weeks and more she had mourned as dead.

The new thought put fresh life and a braver heart into her! She rose to her feet and put out her hand for Majid, resolved that come what might she would not give in yet. She would keep up heart and pluck to the last, the very last, hoping and believing that the Power which had saved the father would save the child.

"I don't believe that was Corah," she said, in a whisper; "that did not sound like her voice. I believe she will get my baby in safely. I feel convinced she is still alive,—that they are both still alive, and that it will be well with them in spite of all we heard and fear."

Majid's grave face lightened a little.

"If that was not Corah we heard, she may get the little Baba in safely," he said. "In any case, it must be best for the Mem-Sahib to press on, in order that help may be sent out."

So she consented once more to put herself altogether in his hands, and they set off their steady plodding tramp again. But, alas! Majid did not find that she kept up as well as she did before; very soon she lagged wofully and began to show signs of the greatest weariness, until their steady pace dropped down at last to a mere crawl, a dragging of one sore and weary foot before the other.

No wonder that it was so, poor little soul, for the loss of the child had taken all the strength out of her, and, naturally enough, the all was

not a very large store, and had been soon exhausted. But the faithful Majid cheered her up, urged her on, fed her out of his bottle of chicken-broth, and half-carried her over most of the rough places.

"The Mem-Sahib must *not* give in," he said imperatively. "If the Mem-Sahib can keep up a little longer, we shall get into camp safely. Those are the lights of Singkôte on in front."

She looked up eagerly, and, sure enough, on ahead were a few twinkling lights but dimly visible in the first dawn of the grey morning.

"Is that really Singkôte, Majid?"

"That is Singkôte, Mem-Sahib," he answered.

"How far is it?"

"Only about a mile and a half, Mem-Sahib."

A mile and a half! It seemed to that weary and exhausted woman that he might as well at once have said a hundred miles and a half.

"Majid, *I* can't walk a mile and a half," she faltered.

"Not quickly, but the Mem-Sahib will get there a little at a time—every step counts, and we are too near the city now to come to much harm. Perhaps we may see some of the Sahib-loge driving or riding presently."

And sure enough Majid was right, and before they had toiled on for more than a couple of hundred yards further, a light buggy drawn by a seedy grey horse and driven by a stout old gentleman in white clothing approached them

from the city. At the sight of Majid's warning he drew rein and asked what they wanted.

"Is that an English lady?" he asked, peering at the travel-stained figure in the background.

"Yes, Sahib—a fugitive, and the wife of Mordaunt Sahib, who—"

But Majid never finished that sentence, for the old gentleman had flung the reins upon the old horse's back and himself out of the buggy to the ground.

"My dear lady, what joy for Mordaunt!" he cried, taking both her hands with an air of the oldest and closest friendship. "Why, God bless my soul! he has been mourning you as dead, poor fellow, this past month or more. Why, bless me, he'll go out of his mind for joy. But get into the buggy. I'm sure you're worn out utterly—utterly, you must be. But there, never mind, my dear, your troubles are all over now—you'll be as safe here as in the Bank of England. There, there, my dear, you mustn't cry. You're all right now, you know—why, you'll be back again with your husband in less than half-an-hour."

It would have done the little woman good to cry, to shed a regular flood of tears, but she did not altogether give way then; she dashed the few tears aside that had gathered in her eyes, and let the old gentleman help her into the buggy.

"Can you make room for Majid?" she said. "He's dead beaten. I believe he carried me nearly all the way."

"Oh, of course, of course—we'll make room for him!" cried the old gentleman—who was one of the old school and, but for the lady's pitiable plight, would have seen "the nigger" shot before he would have given him the pampering luxury of a drive back into town.

However, thus bidden, Majid clasped his hands together after the manner of his kind and made a polite bow of thanks; then, without further ado he clambered in, putting himself into as small a space as possible. So the queer-looking party drove back at the best pace the seedy old grey could muster, and presently passed in at the principal gate and went straight up to the Residency.

"Where is Mordaunt Sahib?" the old gentleman shouted as he pulled up. "Oh! is that you, Owen? Do you know where Mordaunt is?"

Mr Owen was a very young man, who had come out to the veranda on hearing the shout.

"Mordaunt? Oh, he's lying on the sofa in the billiard-room. Why—do you want him?"

"His wife here does," returned the older man, with blunt enjoyment at the other's surprise.

"*Mrs Mordaunt!*" he exclaimed, coming down the steps, and holding out his hands—for all Europeans were dear friends in those days. "Why, Mordaunt will go out of his poor distracted mind with joy. He's been nearly mad for weeks."

The sound of voices and their exclamations

of surprise had brought one or two other white-garbed men upon the scene—among them one Ennis of the Black Horse, who stared at the new-comers for a minute in speechless astonishment.

“Good God! Mrs Mordaunt, is that *you?*” he cried, and without further ado he just took her in his arms and gave her half-a-dozen kisses. “Is it really *you?*” he cried. “Oh! my poor child, you must have had a terrible time of it to change you so. But what will Mordaunt say? Has anybody told him? For Heaven’s sake do it carefully—don’t blurt it out at once.”

“You’d better go, Ennis,” someone suggested. “Mordaunt’s in the billiard-room.”

Thus bidden, Ennis disappeared in the direction of the billiard-room, leaving the others still in the large hall. He found Mordaunt asleep.

“I say, old chap,” he began.

The other, sleeping very lightly, woke with a start.

“Eh? what?—anything wrong?” he asked anxiously.

“Oh, no, my dear chap! quite the contrary. Can you hear news—eh?”

“News! Yes, of course. What news have you?”

Poor fellow, he was so firmly convinced of his wife’s death, that he never dreamt the news could be anything to him more than to anyone else. Ennis took his arm kindly.

"It's good news, old chap—try and bear it bravely."

"Yes?"

"Your wife's been brought in."

He felt Mordaunt cringe and shake, and his face grew a sickly greyish-white.

"Is it—is it—" he began, when Ennis cut him short.

"Why, man alive, didn't I tell you it was *good* news. She's alive—a—*live*, and as well as one could reasonably expect, considering the time she must have had."

"Alive!" he gasped, staring at his comrade as if he were dazed or drunk.

"Yes—come along."

And then poor Mordaunt broke from his friendly hand and dashed into the hall where *she* was. And oh! what a meeting it was—what joy for both—what exclamations and incoherent questions—what an outpouring of unutterable thankfulness to God!

And then, in the midst of it all, the little woman suddenly gave way and flung herself upon her husband's breast with an exceedingly bitter cry.

"Oh, Charlie—Charlie—my baby—my baby—my poor little lost baby!"

So Charles Mordaunt knew for the first time that his little child had been born into the world, and heard all the story of Majid's prudent care and forethought, and of Corah's devotion to that

frail life, which, like a little plant that comes up too early in the spring to weather the last storms of winter, had yet had time to entwine its tendrils close and firm about the mother's heart.

And as the days wore on and parties went out in all directions in the hope of finding alive the baby of the little woman who had borne so much and who had come through so many and great dangers, but returned without any success, the mother's sanguine heart began to fail before the horrible fear that she would never see her little child in this world again.

The uncertainty was terrible—fifty times in the course of the day she said to her husband that she could bear the loss if only she knew the worst—if only she knew what the end had been—if only she knew that the end had come, and that her babe was not left to the mercy of those demons. Yet four days went by and they had no news of the babe or nurse, either dead or alive. Otherwise Mrs Mordaunt would have been thoroughly happy, for surely never was one little woman made so much of before. Everybody in the garrison—and it was a large one—vied with everyone else in trying to do the most for her—the ladies all brought the best and prettiest garments in their wardrobes, and each one of them offered to put their needles at her disposal, so that she might have anything more that she wanted; the men went out, as I said, to search for the child, and had she wished it, she might

have had every carriage in the garrison in which to take her daily drives; and the children brought her flowers and fruit, and one darling tot who knew "the poor pretty lady was sorry because she had lost her baby," brought her a present of a terrier-pup, a siege baby like her own.

So the days went by—four of them—and on the fourth, towards evening, there was news. It was brought into the Mordaunts' quarters by an excited subaltern, who was one of Mrs Mordaunt's most enthusiastic admirers, and who had been one of the most indefatigable searchers for the lost baby. This young gentleman made no attempt whatever to break the news—on the contrary, he blurted out his errand at once.

"Oh! Mrs Mordaunt," he exclaimed, "I believe they've found it, I do really! A young native woman has just been brought in, found a couple of miles out hiding under a bush dead-beat. She's got a baby—says it belongs to an English Mem-Sahib, but she doesn't remember her name. It must be yours."

"It is Corah! Oh! where is she?" cried Mrs Mordaunt, starting to her feet.

"She's over at Forbes' bungalow," he answered.

The mother waited to hear no more—like a mad thing she flew to the place where a group of people were gathered around the new arrival, recognised with a cry of joy the wet-nurse of her child, tore aside with a trembling hand the

wrappings which covered it, and beheld, sleeping peacefully, with one tiny hand outspread against the breast which nourished it—a *little native baby* !

For a moment she was too completely stunned by the intensity of her disappointment to speak ; then the sight of Corah's smiling face fairly roused her into fury !

"My baby ! where is she ? *What* have you done with her ? What child is this ?" she cried, in a passionate voice.

"Is this really the nurse ?" several of the bystanders asked anxiously.

"The nurse ! Of course it is the nurse !" Mrs Mordaunt answered excitedly ; then addressed herself once more to Corah,—"*My baby*—where is she ? What have you done with her ? I tell you I *will* know !"

But it was perfectly useless to rave in English at a poor girl who only understood the Hindustani, and in a moment of less excitement Mrs Mordaunt might have remembered it. However, her words made no impression whatever upon Corah, who still beamed brightly upon her, and made as though she would lay the sleeping infant in her arms. She looked not a little surprised when the Mem-Sahib recoiled a step ; but then a light seemed to break into her mind, and she burst into a low amused laugh.

"Oh ! this is *too much* !" cried the mother indignantly, with an appealing gesture to the

others of the group ; and then—" why—why—what are you doing ? " she faltered.

Well, Corah was just unwinding the soiled and dingy cotton wrappings from the baby, and presently two pink dimpled legs appeared, the limbs not only of a European child, but of Mrs Mordaunt's very own.

There was a little scuffle and a smothered ejaculation ; and then Mrs Mordaunt fell to frantically kissing that baby, first the pink European end, then with equal passion the brown Native end ; and then she cried, and then she laughed, until finally the baby began to cry too, much after the fashion of babies, who have most manners and customs in common, no matter whether it be a poor little atom born in a London slum, or the new little King of Spain, in the account of whose christening there was this pathetic touch : " During the ceremony, His Majesty protested several times in a loud voice."

That was exactly what little Corah Mordaunt did a few hours later, when, the last traces of her disguise having been washed away, she, amid the rejoicings of the whole garrison, was received into the fold of Christ, bearing the name of the poor heathen girl who had saved her life at the risk—ay, the double and treble risk, of her own.

Long afterwards, when the Mordaunts had left India behind them for ever, they heard of poor Corah's death.

" Ah ! Corah was an angel here, she is an

angel above now!" cried Mrs Mordaunt, with tearful eyes. "A heathen? Oh! well, she never changed her religion, certainly, but, all the same, I know I shall meet her over there some day. Corah was very good, really good, and God will do all the rest;" an argument which might not be good theology, but it was very human, and in faith stupendous.





THE FOOL OF THE REGIMENT.

“**O**F course he looks like a fool—that’s his form,” said Bootles, with a laugh; “but Lucy is as clever as daylight down at the bottom of him.”

“Pooh!” said Preston.

“Well, take him in if you can.”

“Oh, that’s easy enough,” Preston assented.

“Is it? I don’t think so. I’ll lay a fiver to any of you who choose to take it, that you don’t do it in a week—there!”

“By a sell?”

“By a sell,” Bootles answered.

“I’ll go shares with you in that bet, Bootles,” put in Harkness, “or offer the same to anyone who’ll take it.”

“I will!” and “I will!” cried several voices.

“All right.” Bootles drew out his pocket-book and began to book the bets. “Preston?—yes; and you?—yes. And you?—yes. Hartog?”

Hartog hesitated for a minute. It was true that he believed Lucy to be a bigger fool even than himself, which in his humble estimation was about the lowest depth of human foolishness which did not touch absolute idiocy ; but then he had great faith in Bootles' powers of judgment and observation, and to take a bet in direct opposition to them, seemed like betting on a certainty against himself.

"Yes, I'll take it," he said at last, very unwillingly.

"Very well. This is Saturday ; the time half-past five in the afternoon. Shall we consider time up at the same hour next Saturday?"

"Yes, yes," agreed the others.

"And you'll not peach to Lucy?" ventured a very young sub.

"Peach!" echoed Bootles, in a disgusted tone.

"Hold your tongue, child, if you can't talk better sense than that," said Hartog, stretching out a long arm that he might stroke the lad's face up and down after the courtship and matrimony style. "Where on earth did you pick up such ideas?" Then shook his head with an air of reflective wisdom which would not ill have done credit to Lucy himself. "It's a melancholy fact that the Service is going to smash, and the Scarlet Lancers won't hold out much longer from the general ruck. I think it comes of so much private coaching. Rags, did you have a private tutor?"

"No; a governess," laughed Miles.

"No, I hadn't," answered the unlucky lad, getting near the door. "I was like old Tony; I sneaked in through the Militia."

Tony Hartog sent a forage-cap flying across the room; but the boy had bolted, and the missile only banged harmlessly against the door.

"The youngster got the best of you that time," Tony," Preston laughed.

"Oh, I come of soldiers, not bookworms," Tony answered good-humouredly; which was true enough, as all the Scarlet Lancers were aware—aware, too, that young Rags was the son of a very distinguished father, had come out through his exams. with honours and prizes and what not, had come out a thorough-going duffer, unable to do anything, as yet, which could add to the credit of the regiment to which he had been gazetted.

Two days passed by, and no sign of the approaching test to Lucy's brains made itself apparent. Lucy, the victim, was as innocent as the babe unborn. But on the Tuesday, just after twelve of the clock at noon, the two who had faith in his sagacity had an opportunity of judging the ingenuity of those who were in league against him—for the storm burst.

I have not said that the season was that which comes just before Christmas, when barracks are at their dullest, and half the regiment is on leave.

Stables were over, lunch was not very far distant, and a group of officers—Lucy among them—was gathered in front of the mess-room windows. Lucy was explaining his views on a new bit just invented by the Colonel, with a lucidity which kept his hearers convulsed with mirth. He broke off short to address a small boy with a dirty face, who had been hovering for a minute or so on the edge of the group.

“Hollo! What do—er—you want?” Lucy asked.

“Want Mr Lucy, sir,” the boy replied.

“Oh, Mr Luce—ay! Well, my boy, I am Mr Luce—ay.”

The lad hitched forward the basket which hung upon his arm and lifted the lid, displaying a profusion of the costliest cut flowers, half smothered in exquisite fronds of fern.

“Brought the flowers, sir; the fruit’ll come by the next train without fail.”

“For me?” in surprised tones.

“Yes, sir. Mr Jaundice is very sorry the fruit’s not come it’ll be ’ere in time for dinner.”

“Oh, vewry well,” said Lucy serenely, having looked at the label attached to the basket, and seen that it bore the address—“Mr Lucy, the Scarlet Lancers.”

He bade the lad, in his gentlest tones, to go into the officers’ quarters, and hammer on the first door to the right of the ground floor back; then turned back to the others, and took up the

discussion concerning the new bit just where he had left it off.

But by-and-by, when they had seen the lad emerge from the officers' quarters and go leisurely out of barracks, swinging his now empty basket to and fro, Lucy's servant came on the scene, and asked if he could speak to him for a minute.

"Yes, Cherwry; what is it?"

"Did you order some fish, sir?"

"Fish? No! I'm not the mess-man."

"No, sir; but—" and there was a sly twinkle in Cherry's eyes, such as told Bootles and Harkness that the supreme moment had come—"there's enough fish in the kitchen, sir, to feed the 'ole barricks—salmon, an' hysters, an' cod, an' soles—to say nothin' of sherremps an' such-like."

"Fish! Where's it come fwrom?" Lucy demanded.

"Three different lots, sir. I took the first lot in *and* the second; but when it come to four 'ole salmon an' two 'undred hysters, I begin to think it's time to arsk if it's all right."

"I suppose they are for me," Lucy began.

"Yes, sir," Cherry answered. "All labelled an' proper. There is a kitchen full of things. They've been a-coming all the morning."

"*The day-vil*," murmured Lucy, then looked up at the others, who were all listening attentively, and had assumed divers expressions of countenance—amused, surprised, incredulous, according to their fancy as to what would most deceive

Lucy into believing that they had had no hand in the affair. "Things been coming all the morning," he repeated, with his wisest air. "Now, I wond-ah is it my birthday or something? I came of age ever so long ago; can't be for that. It's vewry queer. Will any of you—er—fellows come and see the things that have been coming all the morning?"

Of course each and all professed themselves as most willing, Bootles and Harkness included; and then when they entered the kitchen, which Lucy's man shared in common with Bootles' servant, a sight met their eyes such as had never been seen in that or any other officers' kitchen since the day the Warnecliffe Barracks were first occupied.

At the sight of his master's truly bewildered face, Bootles' servant began to grin broadly, then wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, by way of hiding it.

He might well grin—so did they all, Bootles, Captain Ferrers, that is, included; only Lucy stood helplessly in the middle of the kitchen, and feebly ejaculated, "*The day-vil!*" Coming all the morning. Yes, that might well be. There were a dozen fat turkeys and as many prime geese hanging up to the hooks of the dresser; there were strings and strings of sausages, a huge basket heaped full of eggs, two bulging sacks of flour propped up against the wall, and close by four flitches of bacon and half-a-dozen

immense hams. There were some two dozen chickens, and a great quantity of game of all kinds, from rich-hued, long-tailed pheasants to snowy-plumed ptarmigan and speckled guineafowls. There were great joints of beef, and a few legs of mutton, two haunches of venison and a huge boar's head with half-closed eyes and a diabolical and ghastly grin upon its parted lips.

Lucy's first helpless air of surprise soon passed off. He never looked at any of the officers, but walked slowly round the show and saw for himself just what there was and was not, saw that every separate article was labelled and addressed to Mr Lucy, the Scarlet Lancers.

"Somebody wants to do me in the eye," he observed, poking at a fat turkey with his whip; then looked round for the first time, and with his wisest air, "All wright, let 'em do."

"Ere's some more, sir," murmured Cherry.

"Some more" consisted of three tradesmen's carts, one bearing in red and gold letters on its side a flaming announcement to the effect that George Marston was the possessor of an Italian warehouse; another bore a simple inscription enough:—"John Foster, wine merchant;" while the third proclaimed itself to be the property of "Albert Simpson, fancy baker and confectioner."

Well, George Marston had sent a liberal increase to the already liberal supply in Lucy's kitchen, and the vanman, together with the two soldier-

servants, had a somewhat lively time of it ere the van was driven off.

Lucy surveyed the new arrivals with a delightful air of child-like pride and utter helplessness combined.

"What are those, Cherwry?" he asked, as Cherry staggered in with a huge basket.

"Jam, sir," answered Cherry, grinning.

"Ah!" murmured Lucy—"Jam—eh?"

Sorted out, there proved to be a dozen pots of almost every jam that could be mentioned, together with the same quantity of marmalade and as many pots of honey. These were backed by groceries of every description, from sugar and rice by the half-hundredweight to candied peel and Yankee-tickle.

The consignment from the neat van proved to be many dozens of wine, liquors, and spirits—from sherry to still hock, from Margaux to Vin Brût, from Maraschino to milk punch, and from fine cognac to De Kuyper's Hollands.

Then followed the fancy baker with his cargo, till the kitchen fairly overflowed, and new-comers had to be accommodated in the passage. His was a pretty set out. Pies and patties and puffs, sweets and dainties of every sort, and shape, and description, with a huge wedding-cake to crown the whole, and a dozen pounds of sponge finger-biscuits, perhaps meant to make Lucy think a little of his latter end.

Before the fancy baker's cart had disgorged

itself, a rully appeared upon the scene, and the name running around the edge thereof was that of Henry Pettigrew, Furnishing Ironmonger.

"Now what the day-vil," asked Lucy helplessly, of those about him, "can I want with any furnishing ironmongery?"

The rully-man "didn't know nothing!" His orders was to bring them there things to the cavalry barricks, and that was all he knew, howsomever.

Therefore, having safely brought "them there things to the cavalry barricks," and having helped the soldier-servants to lug the two huge crates which contained them to the ground, the good man departed, and Cherry and Browne proceeded to investigate.

When crate No. 1 was opened, the first thing which came to light was a printed list, setting forth, in the highest terms, the excellent quality of Mr Henry Pettigrew's goods. Lucy took it from his servant, remarking that he supposed "a vewry smudgy V marked against almost every article was to prove that Mr Henwry Pettigwrew had sent him a vewry complete set of culinawry utensils. But what the day-vil," he asked, "can Mr Henwry Pettigwrew imagine I want with two pairs of housemaids' gloves? or," plaintively, "an egg-whisk? What is an egg-whisk, by-the-bye? Or an oval wrought iwron pot to hold four gallons—four gallons of *what*? By Jove

here's an item — 'one best copper Bain-Marwri pan, with fourteen vessels, £5, 10s.' Can anyone tell me what it is, and what I am to do with it? A cook's knife and a Bwritaniah metal teapot are wreasonable enough and understandable, but why I should be saddled with a *paste-jagger*, twelve larding-pins, and a salamander, beats my bwrains to find out. But," staring at the paper, "there's a bill pinned to it—'Henwry Pettigwrew to F. Luce-ay, Esq., the Scarlet Lancers—cash pwrices—will be obliged for cheque by wreturn.' Pwretty bill it is too—fifty pounds odd. It's clear someone is trying to do me in the eye. Is it you fellows?"

"Oh, Lucy!" they cried.

"It's easy to say 'Oh, Luce-ay!' but Luce-ay ain't such a fool as he looks, not by a long way. I'm a fool, of course. I always said so. But look here," pointing to the request at the foot of the bill, "that's let the cat out of the bag a shade too soon, eh? 'Cheque by wreturn will oblige.' Then, let me tell you, I'll see all you fellows d——d before a cheque of mine will oblige Mr Henwry Pettigwrew or anybody else."

"Lady asking for you, sir," announced Cherry at this juncture,—“lady in a cab.”

"A lady?"

Lucy went out to the cab.

"Shall I find Mrs Lucy here?" the occupant asked.

"I'm afwraid there's a mistake," returned Lucy,

with a polite salute; "I am Mr Lucy, but I am not marwried."

"I have come from Madame Wheeler's—Madame Marie Wheeler's," said the young lady, in a bewildered way, "to fit Mrs Lucy for three ball-dresses."

Lucy cast an indignant glance at his brother officers.

"And Madame Wheeler lives in Warnecliffe?" he asked quietly.

"Oh, no, sir, near the Brompton Oratory, in the Brompton Road."

"I am vewry sorwry you cannot fit Mrs Lucy, for no such lady exists," Lucy told her. "A joke has been played upon me, and—er—let me see, are the dwresses pwretty? You have them here?"

"Oh, yes, sir; they are most lovely dresses."

"I did not know the joke had been carwried out of Warnecliffe. I will send the dwresses to my cousins. They live in South Kensington Square, and I will ask them to come to Madame Wheeler's to be fitted. Let the entire bill be sent in to me."

Then the cab moved away, Lucy touched his cap, and that episode was over—not quite so the consequences thereof, for Lucy went back to the group.

"A joke is a joke, and a sell is a sell," he remarked, "and a howling cad is a howling cad; but in my opinion they ought to be kept sepawrate

and not mixed up together, as some people mix 'em."

Bootles laughed out aloud, partly from pleasure that Lucy had been clever enough to hit the right nail exactly on the head, and partly because the conspirators' faces wore the "sold" expression which they had intended to see on Lucy's.

"Er—Cherwy," said Lucy to his servant, in his usual sweet tone of serenity, "go down to Gill's and tell him to send a van at once—or stay, I'll send a note—and then you can get all these things carted out of barwracks as soon as possible."

"Yes, sir," said Cherry solemnly.

Within a couple of hours the discomfited officers saw a huge furniture van, drawn by a couple of horses, go slowly out of the barracks, carrying off "the effects" of their monster practical joke. Bootles and Harkness fairly roared over the done look on their faces.

"I suppose you're satisfied," Bootles cried, in derision. "By Jove! I knew old Lucy would never be taken in by any of you, but I never guessed he would turn the tables on you so completely. To think of shovelling all your precious orders into a furniture van, and washing his hands of the whole concern! And you call him a fool!" he ended, laughing yet more, "you persist in calling him a fool; that's the cream of the joke!"

But Bootles was mistaken—it wasn't; the cream of the joke was yet to come. The week

passed over; Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday rolled themselves away, and still those of the Scarlet Lancers who were engaged in the plot against Lucy did not succeed in winning their wager, possibly because after the utter and complete failure of their gigantic "sell" they had never tried.

During those three days Lucy comported himself in much his ordinary manner, that is, with a mixture of serenity and foolishness which suited him far better than any other air would have done, for Lucy was a handsome young gentleman, and his expression of wise stupidity was the most killing thing in the world. He contrived to get out of Hartog (as big a "blab" as ever let out a secret) who was concerned in the wager, and he received a great many letters, presumably bills, the contents of which he did not disclose to anyone. And at last, on Saturday morning, the cream of the joke came to the surface of the uppermost stratum of society in Warnecliffe Barracks. It came with the *Warnecliffe Weekly News*, and in the form of an announcement. It had this heading:

"MUNIFICENT DONATION.

"The following gentlemen, officers of the Scarlet Lancers, now quartered at Warnecliffe" (here followed the names of the conspirators), "in order to mark their appreciation of the hospi-

talities which has been shown to them during the past two years in the city and neighbourhood, have forwarded a set of costly cooking utensils of the most complete description to the Warnecliffe County Hospital. Also, to that institution and to the Warnecliffe Union Workhouse they have sent liberal provision for Christmas dinners. These include to each institution—"Then followed a list of the various articles of food and drink which had had so short a sojourn in the kitchen of Lucy's quarters, and the announcement wound up with a touching tribute to the good taste, good feeling, and kindness of the donors, and an assurance of the gratitude which would be felt by the recipients of their generosity.

It was Harkness who read the announcement for the benefit of all whom it might concern.

"And as you fellows simply forged Lucy's signature to the different orders, you'll have to pay the piper."

"And you call that fellow a fool!" exclaimed Bootles.

"But," said Lucy's sweet affected drawl at the door, "but, my fwriends, he's not such a fool as he looks."





STAGE-EFFECTS.

CHAPTER I.



HE was without exception the most intensely disagreeable old woman I ever came across. Worse luck, she was also my mother-in-law.

She was tall, with a certain fineness and dignity of presence, with well-drawn aquiline features, a pair of cold grey eyes that were capable of going through and through one like a pair of gimlets, and a thin-lipped mouth like a steel trap. She was not an old woman—fifty or thereabouts—yet somehow everyone called her “old Mrs Fanshawe”—it might have been in contradistinction to young Mrs Fanshawe at the other end of the town; that is, Jack’s wife.

It was often a source of great wonder to me that anything could have induced old Fanshawe (who never was old, for he died at thirty odd) to

marry her, though I cannot say it has been any wonder to me at all, or to anyone else I ever heard of who knew my mother-in-law, that he did not live to see forty. *She killed him!*

Not with fair, honest, open, and above-board killing, say a knife, or a few grains of arsenic, or rat poison—a tangible something which might have been taken hold of and ended in a hanging. Oh, no! but with that unruly member, the tongue; with perpetual talkings and naggings and moanings, with long-winded prayers at him and his unregenerate condition alike, at all times and all seasons, suitable and unsuitable, and invariably at morn and eventide, to the agony of poor old Fanshawe, the pity of a couple of maid-servants, and the exquisite enjoyment of a little impudent imp in buttons, who made a practice of calling his mistress a kind Christian lady to her face, and behind her back declared “Missus is a ’orror; and I wish as ’ow bogle-bo would come down the chimney some night and carry ’er orf, that I do.” “Carry ’er orf,” Jane Bell, the cook, would exclaim, mimicking the little imp’s Cockney tongue—Cook rules over my digestion now, and it was from her that I learnt all the details of Molly’s unhappy childhood. God bless her, the kind soul! she stood by my poor crushed little dove through all those unhappy years, and I mean to stand by her to the end of the chapter—“Carry ’er orf! Why, it’s fair shameful to hear her a-carrying on at master as she does. She’ll kill him, and then

she'll be satisfied. I believe that's what she wants, that she may bring that sneaking rat-faced parson here instead of him!"

Kill him she eventually did, but not soon enough. By the time poor Bob Fanshawe had learnt at last what peace was, that rat-faced parson, otherwise the Reverend Septimus Bloggs, had taken unto himself a wife, and was therefore ineligible for the situation Mrs Fanshawe had to offer. So Mrs Fanshawe promptly canonised poor Bob, changing him from an unregenerate sinner to her blessed saint in Heaven; and then she set herself to try and do her three children, as she had done their father, to death.

She was very religious, but that was neither here nor there.

Of these three children there were two girls and a boy—Elizabeth, John, and Mary. At the time of their father's death, Elizabeth was eleven, John ten, and Mary but two years old. There had been other children intervening, who had succumbed to treatment as their father did after them. The two elder ones were, however, sturdy, healthy youngsters, taking largely after their mother in constitution. Little Mary was delicate, like her father, and, had it not been for the imperative intervention of the family doctor, would assuredly have been a cherub long before I had the felicity of meeting her, and laying myself down, mind, body, and estate, at her little feet.

When that blessed event came about she was

just eighteen, a sweet, timid little dove, with soft, coaxing ways, a tangle of fair bright hair, a pair of great mild blue eyes, and the dearest little pug of a nose in the world. To this day I never look at Molly without thanking a merciful Providence that she did not inherit the finely artistic lines of her mother's countenance, but that she had had sufficient sense, even at that early stage of her existence, to take after her father.

Jack was different—in fact, Jack was a complete mixture of both parents—a fine fellow, very, with his mother's nose, which sat very well on his father's fair bright face. And Jack had the best medical practice in Little Barton and the neighbourhood, for here the father's sweetness and the mother's dogged resolution and severity stood him in good stead.

For his mother Jack didn't care a rap. He used to laugh in her face when she talked at him, and tell her old ladies should keep to their church-work, and not interfere with matters they knew nothing about. Jack had married to please himself, a sharp bright little woman, who didn't care a snap of her plump little fingers for her mother-in-law, or any one else's.

Elizabeth was a married woman when I first knew them—Mrs Septimus Bloggs, wife of the rector of Little Barton. Yes; the very same man, ay, and the very same woman too, for Elizabeth Bloggs was the facsimile, the counter-part, the synonym of her charming mother over again.

Cook says when the first Mrs Septimus Bloggs took a weary leave of this world, Mrs and Miss Fanshawe had a hand-to-hand fight for the rector, and Elizabeth won. It was rather a pity for poor Septimus Bloggs ; for he being twenty years older than Elizabeth cannot reasonably expect to outlive her, while had he stuck to the mother he would have been a free man long ago—not but that it serves him right for marrying either of them. Well, such was the Fanshawe family, as I first knew it—that is, when I, William Manners, went to Little Barton in the capacity of agent to the squire, Sir Hugh Brande, of the Hall. I was then just seven-and-twenty, a big muscular man, not bad looking, a good shot, easy in the saddle, fair with my fists, and a neat hand at billiards, with, at all events, sense enough to fall in love with Molly Fanshawe, and a good enough man all round for her to fall in love with me.

I used to see a good deal of her at Jack's, and of a truth I didn't let the matter hang long on hand—I asked her one soft summer night, out in the garden behind Jack's substantial house, and Molly—God bless my darling !—said yes.

Lord, how happy I was that night ! We went in and imparted the news ; Jack wrung my hand nearly off, and Mrs Jack just flung her arms round my neck and kissed me heartily, said she *was* so pleased, that Molly was a lucky girl, and the dearest, sweetest, and best in the wide world. I, of course, agreed with her.

And then that old fiend smashed all by saying No, by looking No, by meaning No, and by keeping to No—*she* would have said religiously. She is dead and gone, and we are told to speak no ill of dead. I don't wish to do it, but I did hate that woman then, and I believe I called her a beast.

I had one dreadful interview with her ; I told her my age, also that my father, who was major of the —th Foot, was killed during the Crimea—at which she drew down her steel trap of a mouth and remarked that it was no credit to him. I told her that I had a hundred and fifty a year of my own, which I proposed to settle upon Molly, and that I had four hundred a year from Sir Hugh Brande ; I likewise added the information that I loved Molly dearly, and that Molly loved me.

Mrs Fanshawe waived that question altogether. She said she could not deny that at present I had a very good situation (as if I were a butler), but that, of course, I was liable to be dismissed at any moment that I chanced to displease my master (I began to dislike Mrs Fanshawe very thoroughly at this point), and moreover that she regarded worldly wealth as a very secondary consideration ; she had promised her dear saint in heaven to supply his place to their children, and with regard to Mary—she never called her Molly—her mind was quite made up. She would not be here long, she felt that her pilgrimage was almost at an end, and before laying down the worn-out garment of the soul her intention was to consign

her weak and wayward little daughter into the safe keeping of the bosom of the Church.

"Good heavens!" I cried, "are you going to force her into a convent?"

Mrs Fanshawe smiled in a superior kind of way, as if in pity for my ignorance.

"Certainly not. You misunderstand me. I am not one of those who see great merit in celibacy. When I spoke of the bosom of the Church, I referred to Mary's approaching marriage with our good assistant-priest Mr Stamper."

"Do you *mean* it?" I demanded incredulously.

"Certainly I mean it, Mr Manners," she answered.

"You will marry Molly to that miserable little whippersnapper—that—that beardless, mindless, bloodless little puppet—that dressed-up ape in a white gown with his yellow eyes turned into his head, with his miserable weak whining snuffle of a voice? You will force your young daughter into the arms of a wretched cock-sparrow like that?"

"You are losing your temper, Mr Manners," remarked Mrs Fanshawe calmly.

Losing it! That was a polite way of putting it—my temper was already lost, clean gone.

"Never mind my temper, Mrs Fanshawe," I said, trying hard to be cool and collected. "Do you know that Mr Stamper has sore eyes and that his hands are clammy?"

Mrs Fanshawe drew herself up stiffly.

"Mr Manners, your remarks are disgusting. They are not fit for a lady to hear."

"If they are not fit for an *old* lady to hear about," I cried triumphantly, "what will they be for a *young* lady to feel? If my remarks are disgusting, so are those two particular personal peculiarities of Mr Stamper's very disgusting—I have thought so myself many a time. I never shake hands with him if I can help it—if I have to, why, I always wipe my hand as soon as I can. As to the other thing, it's not quite so nasty, and yet—I shouldn't like to kiss Stamper—would you, Mrs Fanshawe?"

"You insult me!" she gasped, rising.

I rose too. As she grew warm I, happily, grew cool; I always do that.

"At *any* time of your life, would you have *liked* to marry Stamper?" I demanded.

"When a priest of the Church militant invites a young and inexperienced girl like Mary to share his lot in life, *it—is—in . deed—an—HONOUR*," she answered.

I could not help it: I said, "O Lord!" and then I went out and left the old cat—Victrix.

I never saw Molly. I found out from Mrs Jack that she was a prisoner locked in her bedroom. They comforted me—she and Jack—all they could; but what was my comfort when none could reach her? I positively could not endure their kindness, but went back to my room to bear my pain alone. It was the worst pain I had ever known.

It was growing dark when there came a gentle tap-tap on the door, and Mrs Fanshawe's cook, Jane Bell, entered.

"I hope you won't think me very wrong, sir," she began—"I daresay it is; but she has been crying her heart out, poor lamb, and I thought that a bit of a note--"

"Give it to me—oh! you good woman, oh! you good woman!" I cried, understanding at last.

I read my darling's bit of a note, written in pencil on half a sheet of paper, telling me she would die before she would marry Stamper, and asking me would I promise to wait for her till she was twenty-one.

Would I wait!

I wrote an answer as plain as the question, saying I would wait till crack of doom if need be.

Jane Bell took a good many things backward and forwards after that—paper, pen, ink, bon-bons, books, and the like, bringing me letters in return. All through the time, nearly three years, which passed before Molly was of an age to please herself whom she would marry, this went on. During all that time the old woman's vigilance never relaxed; never once did Molly go outside the door without her mother, and never once, to my knowledge, was she left in the house alone. Yet I saw her sometimes, for Jane Bell was a very good friend to both of us. They were very sweet, those stolen interviews, and without them I believe my poor Molly would have died. As it was how she bore

up and defied her mother and the bosom of the Church alike, I really do not know. I said as much one day to Jack's wife. Jack's wife looked up at me for a minute, then looked into the fire.

"It's only fair," she remarked, "that we women don't have to serve in the regular army, for there are plenty of us in the Noble Army of Martyrs."

CHAPTER II.

AT last the long and weary months of waiting were over, and Molly was twenty-one. The day following her birthday we were married. Jack fetched her away during the evening, and gave his mother a piece of his mind in exchange for her. Lord, how happy we were, she and I! What did it matter to us how Mrs Fanshawe raved?—how she prophesied evil, and in strictly Scriptural language, heaped curses upon our heads? We did not care a rap, we went and got married, and that was the great thing. Septimus Bloggs was away, and, as we went armed with a licence, the curate—no, I mean the priest in charge—could not refuse to do his duty, so Stamper married us. It was rather a joke, and Jack's wife said it served the little wretch right. She even asked him to the breakfast, but he did not come! We didn't care. Sir Hugh sent me a cheque for fifty pounds, his good wishes, and a pretty bracelet engraved "Good Luck" for Molly. We had a fortnight and Paris before us, and we didn't care a rap for anybody, not for anybody.

And Sir Hugh did something more, something I rather wished the dear old fellow had left undone—he went and pleaded for us with my mother-in-law, so that when we came back we found ourselves friends again.

For my part, I would much rather not have been friends, so would Molly, for Mrs Fanshawe was one of those meddling, managing, housewifely persons, always with her finger in somebody's pie. Now in Elizabeth Bloggs' pie there was no chance of her having even so much as the tip of her finger—Elizabeth Bloggs was herself over again. She met her with a mouth full of duty and reverence, and a longer string of texts than even Mrs Fanshawe had at command; she flaunted her husband's authority in her mother's face, and reminded her of her devotion to her blessed saint in heaven, otherwise poor Bob Fanshawe, whose authority had been just about as great as the authority of the Reverend Bloggs up at the Rectory.

Nor, blocked as regarded the pie of her eldest daughter, did Mrs Fanshawe succeed any better with respect to Jack's. *Mrs Jack took care of that.* Thereupon she fell back upon us, and we got the benefit, not of her finger but of her whole hand, generally both of them.

I stood it for nearly a year, and then I put a stop to it. I had tried before, not once or twice, but many times, but somehow the old lady was always too many for me. She would remind

Molly tragically of the mother she had been to her, at which poor Molly, who was not at that time very strong, would begin to sob piteously, when Mrs Fanshawe would further call to her remembrance that she had forgiven her base ingratitude and defiance, and had taken her to her arms again. That always conquered Molly, and Mrs Fanshawe's grey eyes would glare at me in triumph. I am afraid I often went out and made remarks it would not be polite to repeat. I used to go into the little hall and say them to the hatstand or the door-mat, but, as things turned out afterwards, I wished hundreds of times I had allowed myself to have the satisfaction of saying them to my mother-in-law herself.

We came to open war, instead of the armed neutrality which had been our attitude since my marriage to Molly, in this way. We were hourly expecting the birth of Ethel, our eldest child, and Molly, having nearly been worried to death during the past four years, was very ill, very ill indeed. Jack and an elderly doctor from Blankhampton were in anxious attendance—my mother-in-law was kneeling by the side of my wife's bed praying in a loud voice and chiefly for me—just, so Jane Bell said, as years before she had been wont to pray in public for poor Bob, now a blessed saint in heaven. As for me, I was hanging about anywhere, feeling more uncomfortable and miserable than I had ever felt in all my life.

“Take that woman away!” I heard the strange

doctor say in authoritative tones, when once I paused by the open door of Molly's room.

"Come downstairs, Mother," I heard Jack say imperatively.

My mother-in-law prayed on louder than ever.

"Mother, do you hear?" said Jack.

But no, she prayed on, a loud, wooden, talking-at-people sort of prayer. She prayed with a frankness which was simply appalling. I stepped into the room; I motioned to Jack, and we grabbed her simultaneously, and whisked her out of it pretty much after the manner in which children play at honey-pots. Once outside the door she tried to turn like a stag at bay; but we hustled her down to the dining-room, and there Jack expounded his views—they were very clear, but they were not polished, not by any means.

By the skin of her teeth my poor little Molly was pulled through, but I forbade my mother-in-law the house. She threatened to cut Molly off with a shilling. I told her she was very welcome to do it. So she raved of her duty to her mother. I ventured to hint that her first duty was obedience to me; and so we got rid of her.

Five years went by, five happy, happy years, which saw us with four little copies of Molly round our table. During that time Mrs Fanshawe never once darkened our doors, and Molly saw her but seldom, though if she did chance to come across her or the children she never lost the opportunity of having a fling at her for sending out our chil-

dren in presentable clothing, or for being becomingly dressed herself.

And then quite suddenly and unexpectedly Mrs Fanshawe went and died. I cannot say I was sorry. Molly drew down the blinds and ordered a black gown, but did not think it was necessary to weep. Jack said, openly, that his mother had been a mistake of nature—a complete mistake.

So she was buried, and we all went back to her house to hear the will read: it was short and exceedingly simple, for everything was left to Mrs Septimus Bloggs, with the exception of a certain iron-bound box, which was bequeathed, with its contents, to Molly. At the end came this peroration:—

“This I leave, and this only, to my daughter Mary, the wife of William Manners, at present agent to Sir Hugh Brande, because she has openly defied me, and has been a disobedient and ungrateful child; and because the contents thereof being part of the theatrical wardrobe of an aunt of my late husband’s, who disgraced herself and her family by acting on the stage, and met a sinner’s death by a stroke of lightning, may prove to her taste in dressing herself and her children. And being fond of sham worth, she may value the paste ornaments in the blue box which will be found therein.”

Jack was never mentioned. And so my mother-in-law aimed her two last venomous shafts from the very grave itself. Molly was bitterly hurt

and very indignant. She would have left the poor dead-and-gone actress's belongings behind, but Jack sent them home to us, and we turned them over before consigning the iron-bound chest to the lumber-room. There was a great variety—rich-coloured brocades, fine laces, soft satins, velvets, and silks; and at the bottom of all a large blue leather case containing a profusion of stage jewellery—a whole suite of paste brilliants, a suite of emeralds, several strings of large pearls, some pearl ornaments, and a variety of odds and ends. Molly looked at them with a sigh. "Poor thing!" she said; "and she was killed by a flash of lightning! Poor thing! Ah, well, they didn't look bad, I dare say, on the *stage*," and then she closed the lid and dropped the case once more among the old and faded silks and satins.

Jane Bell told us that she well remembered the box coming when the then "old Mrs Fanshawe" died, that is Bob's mother. The mistress had told her all about the master's sister, who had been killed by lightning many and many a year before, almost on the eve of her marriage with Lord Cumberland. She was Bob's eldest sister, older than him by sixteen years, and the eldest of a large family of which he was the little Benjamin. Jane Bell went on to describe how my mother-in-law had turned the contents of this box over, remarking that Miss Margery Fanshawe must have been a very frivolous and gay person, judging by her taste in dress, then she had picked up two very

old and faded newspapers, which were pushed down at one side of the box, and after reading them, threw them back and locked up the box in silence, "with that turn of the lip, poor thing," said Jane Bell, "as told them as knew her that she was not best pleased."

Molly took the papers down with her and looked them over. I copy two paragraphs. The *Morning Chronicle*, March 5, 1793 :—

"COVENT GARDEN THEATRE.

"A lady made her first appearance last night as Zara in *The Mourning Bride*. The fair candidate for the public favour, after the first apprehension had subsided, displayed powers of a very superior kind. In the touches of tenderness with which the part is occasionally enriched, she affected the heart with the pathos and melody of her tones, and proved that her voice is naturally rich, various, and flexible. Her figure is exquisitely beautiful. Her complexion is fair, and her lovely features are animated by an expression so spirited as to give promise of a talent for comedy, or at least for the softer emotions of the soul, rather than the vehement passions which she had last night to display in the arduous character of Zara. She has so many of the best endowments for the stage that we trust she means to pursue it. We consider her a most valuable acquisition to the theatre. This morning it is reported, however, that a certain nobleman was so enchanted by her beauty and grace that he intends to lay himself and his coronet at her feet."

"August 23, 1793.—A terrific thunderstorm passed over the metropolis yesterday afternoon, doing a large amount of damage and resulting in several fatalities, of which the most distressing was the death, by the fall of a tree, of his Lordship the Earl of Cumberland and the beautiful and favourite

actress, Miss Margery Fanshawe. The ill-fated pair, who were on the eve of marriage, were walking together in Kensington Gardens when the storm came on. They took shelter under a tree, which, being almost immediately shattered by a flash of lightning, fell, crushing both to death instantaneously. An account of the noble lord will be found in another column. The lady is the eldest daughter of Mr George Fanshawe, of Little Barton, Blankshire. She appeared at Covent Garden Theatre for the first time during the spring of the present year, when she at once sprang into popularity, and by her beauty and grace attracted much notice, notably that of the noble lord whose untimely end she shared."

"Poor thing!" sighed Molly, laying the newspapers, yellow, and torn, and musty, aside with reverent fingers. "Poor young thing!"

I felt sad and depressed that night, for a few months previously Sir Hugh had sent for me and told me that in consequence of the general depression, owing to bad seasons, reduced rents, and empty farms, he would have to reduce my income from four to three hundred a year, and on that very day he had told me to look out for a new berth, taking my own time.

"I positively cannot afford but two hundred and fifty," he said frankly. I stayed on at two hundred and fifty, because I did not find another berth easy to drop into, and of course, as with Molly's little settlement we had still four hundred a year, we were comfortable enough. I heard from Jack that he had suggested to Elizabeth Bloggs that she should go shares in her mother's property with Molly. She answered him with a

text, of course, and added that her dear dead mother's will was law; upon which Jack quarrelled with her, and never spoke to her again, except as to Mrs Bloggs, the rector's wife.

With us life flowed on much the same for more than a year, and then—oh! there came a day—the evil day that old Mrs Fanshawe had foretold: when I had to go home and tell Molly that the Hall was sold, Sir Hugh almost penniless, and I—out of a situation.

Out of a situation I remained for months, and months, and months. We got shabby and careworn, both of us. We gave up our house in Little Barton, and took a very small one in Blankhampton, because nobody knew us there. We had no servant, for we found that our £150 a year was barely enough for ourselves. Ourselves now meant not two but seven.

We were very poor and very hopeless, but our hearts never drifted apart—thank God for it. We talked of emigrating, of realising the capital settled upon Molly, and trying a start in a fresh country. And yet, to make such a start with a delicate wife and five children—five children, who would soon be six—I did not dare to do it.

We had been half a year in the tiny house at Blankhampton, when one evening, as Molly was coming down from putting the last of the children to bed, she tore her dress. She uttered an exclamation of dismay.

“Oh! Willy, I have torn my dress; it caught

on the bolt. How vexing! It is the last I have. How shall I be able to get another? Oh, Willy, Willy, what an unlucky bird I have been to you!" she cried, the tears filling her soft blue eyes.

I caught her to me.

"Unlucky! I'd rather live under a hedge with you, my darling," I told her, "than have any other woman, even a queen, for my wife. Never mind your dress; or stay, why can't you get one of those dresses in the iron-bound chest dyed?"

"Yes, I might," she said doubtfully, smoothing my hand up and down between hers. "We might look at them, at all events."

We took a candle and went upstairs, when Molly opened the box for the first time since the night Jack sent it home to us. She soon picked out a couple of gowns which she said were worth dyeing, and then coming to the blue case, she opened it. The stage jewellery flashed and twinkled in the candle light.

"They really look very well," said she thoughtfully. "I wonder, Willy, if anyone would buy them—any actress, I mean?"

"They might sell. They'll never be any use to us," I replied.

"I'll take them down and clean them up," she said cheerfully—a very small ray of hope makes my darling cheerful. "We might sell them through *The Bazaar*."

So she took them down and cleaned them carefully, making them gleam and glitter as if they were real; and whilst she was doing it we heard a gentle knock at the back door. I opened it, and there stood the wife of our next-door neighbour, quite an uneducated person, yet one whose friendship we valued because it had been given to us in adversity.

"I've brought back the potatoes I borrowed of Mrs Manners to-day," she said pleasantly. She often borrowed little things in that way. Then catching sight of Molly, she cried,—

"Why, Mrs Manners, what have you got there?"

Molly explained, in detail. Mrs Mason turned the ornaments over carefully.

"Mason's a jeweller, you know," she remarked presently.

"Oh, is he? I didn't know," answered Molly.

"I dare say not. We don't tell folks; it's better not, for he often has work to do at home. But he is, and he is something more; he's a diamond-setter—the only one in Blankhampton. Them stones is real," she added carelessly, yet with the air of a woman who knew the value of words.

"What!" we cried together.

"Them's real," she repeated; "worth thousands. Fine emeralds, too—worth more than the diamonds; but I'll fetch Mason."

"Are you *sure*?" cried Molly, in an agonised voice.

"I know a real stone when I see it, my dear," answered Mrs Mason kindly, and disappeared.

When Mason came we found she was right. They were worth thousands—just thirty, and most probably had been Lord Cumberland's last gift to his actress-love. Molly insisted upon sharing them with Jack. Bless her! she still has a firm belief, and will have it to her dying day, that "Mother was only having a little joke out of us" when she left her her great-aunt's stage-effects.





OUT OF THE MISTS.

CHAPTER I.

IT was on a lovely day in June, when London was at its best and brightest, that a big, bronzed man, with a firm, soldier's tread and a clean, spruce, soldier's look about him, turned out of St James's and went in the direction of the Park.

He seemed to be very well known and also to be very well liked, for a good many men stopped to shake his hand in the how-are-you old-fellow style, and several ladies leant from their carriages to bid him welcome home again, with radiant smiles and a brighter light shining in their beautiful eyes than had been there before they rested upon him.

He did not stop more than a minute or so with any of them, and it was not until he reached Apsley House that his own face was lighted up as others had been at the sight of him; then,

however, he pulled up short and grasped a hand which was held out to him with as much show of joy as your ordinary Englishman ever permits himself.

"Why, old chap?" said he.

"St Orme!" exclaimed the owner of the hand, "When did you come? How jolly you look, old fellow! When did you get here? What are you going to do? You're staying in Town, of course?"

"Yes, for ten days. Got here last night—jolly glad to find myself here I am. India is a beastly hole, and no mistake."

"I thought you wouldn't care for it much. But where are you going now?"

"Park," returned St Orme. "Come back with me, Philip."

"All right," rejoined Philip Messant, who would cheerfully have gone to perdition had his friend suggested the trip.

The two men turned and went in at the Park gates, Philip Messant holding St Orme's arm.

"You're on leave, I suppose, Philip?" said St Orme presently, as they walked slowly down the Row.

"My dear chap," answered Messant; "I got three days on the score of my avuncular relative being at the point to die. I am thankful to say," he added piously, "that the old gentleman is a shade better this morning."

St Orme laughed out aloud.

"And all the fellows? How are they?"

"Much the same. Fairlie is married and Hope has left the service. Greville died, you know," in a lower tone.

"Ah, yes, I heard about it. Poor old Greville," murmured St Orme—then suddenly jerked Messant's arm: "I say—who's *that*?"

Messant looked up, recognised a friendly face, and raised his hat to a young lady sitting on one of the chairs in the front row.

"Who is she?" asked St Orme impatiently.

"Miss Dallas, of course."

"Why 'of course'? Who is she?"

"The last thing in stage stars, my friend. All the same, she is a clever girl and a good girl, a lady from the crown of her head to the soles of her feet, and a right good sort at that. Like to know her?"

"Yes—introduce me," said St Orme promptly.

So Philip Messant went up to the young lady on the chair under the tree, and, after an inquiry as to her health, asked if he might introduce his friend, Lord St Orme.

"Oh, yes," said the actress pleasantly—and then St Orme was presented to her.

There was an empty chair beside her—only one. St Orme took it, leaving Messant to stand. He also entered into a conversation with Miss Dallas of so interested a kind that Messant felt he would not be missed by either of them if he went.

"I think I must be going, now, old fellow," he said, rapping St Orme's foot with his stick.

"Good-bye," returned St Orme.

"See you at dinner?" asked Messant.

"Yes—at the United at seven. You'll dine with me, won't you? We can go to a theatre after."

"What theatre?" asked Miss Dallas.

"Yours," returned St Orme promptly.

"I will come," said Messant. "Good-bye, Miss Dallas."

"Good-bye, Mr Messant," she returned. "By-the-bye, I am at home on Sunday."

"Many thanks. I shall be charmed to come."

Then Messant went his way, leaving his old friend in—Paradise.

But he made good use of his time, and contrived to find out more about Miss Dallas than many a man would have done in a month.

He learned that she lived in a flat not a hundred miles from where they were sitting, with her mother and sister. That she was the daughter of a barrister, who had left his widow a moderate income of three hundred a year. That Miss Dallas had gone on the stage partly because she loved her art and felt herself possessed of a gift in that way, and partly because she wished to make her mother's life more easy and more to her liking than life would be on the income which was, for her, a limited one.

"You must come and see us," she said presently. "We have the prettiest little flat in all London

"I shall be enchanted to come," he answered.
"May I come with Messant on Sunday?"

"Yes, come on Sunday," she said, then looked up. "The Princess is coming."

Like everyone else, they rose and went to the railings, and St Orme uncovered his handsome dark head, receiving a pleasant bow of recognition from the most winsome lady in the land as her carriage passed them.

"I must go now," said the actress, as she turned from the railing.

St Orme walked beside her to the gate and saw her into a hansom, wishing wildly that he had a right to get in after her and drive away with her to her home; but the wish was as useless as it was wild.

"Good-bye," she said, with a smile and a little wave of her hand; and then the cab moved off, and St Orme was left standing bareheaded in the bright June sunshine.

He did not go back into the Park, although the stream of fashion and beauty there was at its fullest, and many and many a noble damsel would have given him a welcome as bright and warm as the sunshine which filled the air with radiant light. Instead, he turned back and went along Piccadilly, not as he had come, slow of step and willing to be stopped by any or all who chose to stop him, but with quick, smart step and a face full of a strong and resolute purpose.

It was more than half-past six when he reached

his club, and, after telling the waiter who had before taken the order for his dinner that he would have a guest and would need it at seven o'clock, he went off to dress at the chambers hard by.

But, although he brushed his dark, curly crop of hair into the smoothest of satin-like waves, and was as particular as usual about the set of collar and studs and tie, he only saw one face in the oval glass which stood upon his dressing-table—the face of the actress, Violet Dallas.

It was such a lovely face, delicate in feature, and expressive to a degree, and it was framed in masses of bronze brown hair, with a dash of gold across their luxuriant beauty. The eyes were like her name, Violet, a deep blue, like the blue of the sweet spring flowers which are the emblems of modesty and fragrance.

They were *not*—as the eyes of actresses are generally supposed to be—set in lashes black as night, but with long brown fringes that were not even very dark. True, Violet Dallas was a *real* actress, just as St Orme was a real soldier, so that she was no more like the actress of the story-books than he was like the ordinary guardsman of fiction.

Anyway, her face haunted St Orme persistently as he dressed that night, ay, and haunted him all the time that he sat at dinner with his old friend and comrade, Messant—haunted him, indeed, till he found himself once more in the stalls of a London theatre, and Violet Dallas was on

the boards before him. He thought her just ten thousand times more lovely than he had done before. Oh! what grace—what charm was hers. She was lovely—lovely—lovely!

“Pretty gal,” said Messant carelessly, in his ear, just as he came to that conclusion.

St Orme scowled, but made no reply in words. He had never thought that Messant was either a fool or a cad before—he thought him both now.

“She’s a good little girl, too,” Messant went on, not heeding, or for the matter of that noticing his friend’s silence. “She doesn’t want to *marry* a fellow, don’t you know?”

“I should think not,” broke out the other fiercely.

Messant laughed good-naturedly.

“You think she hasn’t much temptation in my case? Well, you’re about right there, old chap; but all the same it’s very pleasant to feel you can know a charming girl without that sort of thing being expected of you, don’t you know?”

“No, I don’t,” returned St Orme curtly.

Messant laughed, and turned his attention to a box on the left of the stage.

“Poor old chap, how touchy he is since he left us—poor old chap.”

Meantime, St Orme had taken a vow which he meant to keep—it was that, sooner or later, the sooner the better, Violet Dallas should be Lady St Orme.

CHAPTER II.

THE brilliant London season had come to a close. The trees were grey with dust, and half the houses in the West End were closed and apparently had gone into retreat.

But St Orme was still in town, and Violet Dallas was still delighting the audiences of the Royal with her beauty and her art. Both were, however, just on the wing; the Dallases for Lucerne, and St Orme—well, for any part of the world that might hold the Dallases for the next month to come. He was still as determined as ever to carry out the vow that he had made one lovely night in June, when he sat in the stalls of the Royal by Philip Messant's side. But he seemed no nearer now to the accomplishment thereof than he had been then. True, he was an intimate and frequent guest in the Dallases' pretty flat; he sent costly gifts of fruit and flowers there several times a week; he lavished tickets for operas, theatres, and concerts upon Violet's mother and sister; he took them to Hurlingham and Ranelagh; his carriages and horses were at their disposal. Nay, more than all, he had never rejoined his regiment,

but had managed an exchange into the Guards—for give up his profession he could and would not.

Yet he seemed no nearer to the end which he had in view. Violet Dallas was as friendly as possible to him—"a deuced sight too friendly," he was accustomed to tell himself time and again. He knew that she liked him, but he did not dare believe that she loved him.

The night of her last performance came. St Orme was in the stalls as usual, more hopelessly in love than ever, more determined than he had ever been to win the woman he loved for his wife.

He did not see her again, for he had never dared to go near the stage-door, at which the Dallahses' staid elderly maid was always to be seen entering at a fixed hour each night; but he went back to his club with a resolve that on the following day he would put matters to the test, and know his fate and hers.

So, with the customary offering of flowers, he sent a note, just a line or two, asking her if he called at four o'clock that afternoon might he see her alone?

"I think you must know," he ended, "how I love you. The question which must make or mar all my after life is, do you love me?"

Now, the Dallahses, mother and daughters, together with a bright young cousin who was to make one of their party, were to start that night from Liverpool Street for Switzerland, and were therefore rather in a state of "sixes and sevens."

Violet happened to be late at breakfast, and Mrs Dallas, as she was in the habit of doing, at once arranged St Orme's flowers in the various bowls and jars which stood here and there in the pretty sitting-rooms. The note she laid upon the breakfast-table beside her plate. Then, having completed the decoration of that room, she gathered up her tray of flowers and went off to finish the adornment of the drawing-room.

A moment later, Cecily Dallas and her gay young cousin, Mary Temple, came in, and seeing the letter beside Violet's plate, they, in the gaiety of their overflowing light-heartedness, suggested teasing Violet a little.

"Let us hide it," laughed Cecily.

"Where?" asked the cousin.

"Oh, here—put it inside Vi's book. She said she should finish reading it first thing this morning. Yes, put it just there at the last leaf."

"I suppose it's from *him*?" said Mary, turning the note over and over.

"Oh, yes — that's his coronet at the back. There, shut it up—put it there on the little table by the window, just where Vi will sit when she has done her breakfast. That's it—come away."

Laughing and giggling like the two gay young things they were, they went off to Mary's bedroom, and, as far as possible, finished their packing. Meantime, Mrs Dallas, having disposed of all the flowers excepting a few creamy rosebuds, went into the dining-room and laid them down

upon Violet's table—as it happened, upon Violet's book. Then she, too, went out of the room, never noticing that the letter which she had laid beside Violet's plate was gone.

Half-an-hour later the two girls came back, finding Violet lying idly in a big chair, two or three creamy roses at her throat, and the closed book on the table before her.

“Ah! finished your book, Vi?” asked Cecily.

“Yes,” answered Violet.

“H'm—did you like it?”

“Yes, fairly well.”

“Did you — did you *find* anything?” Mary blurted out.

Violet moved in her chair, and the scent of the rosebuds wafted up to her.

“Yes, I found something,” she said, smiling tenderly.

“Oh! you did. And you liked it?”

“Very much,” smiling still.

“That's all right. Well, Mary and I are going out; will you come?”

“Not this morning, dears.”

So the two girls went their way, confident that their little trick had succeeded—as, indeed it had, far better than they suspected or desired—and Violet sat still to wait for him.

Naturally, he did not come, and after an hour of idleness, she rose and set her little table straight, finally taking up the book, which she had finished reading the previous night, and put-

ting it away in the bookcase which stood between the windows.

Still he did not come, and at last Violet grew weary of waiting and went out.

"He will come at five, as usual," she said to herself. "I shall be back by then. I only want to get those gloves in Bond Street. I shall be back by five."

And exactly at four of the clock, Lord St Orme knocked at Mrs Dallas's door. It was opened, as usual, by the neat young parlour-maid, who held it wide open that he might pass in.

"Miss Dallas at home?" he asked.

"Mrs Dallas is at home, my lord," she answered.

St Orme's eyebrows lifted themselves a trifle and his heart said, "What a bore." However, he followed Margaret into the drawing-room, where he found not only Mrs Dallas, with Cecily and Mary Temple, but he found that there was no Violet.

They greeted him with more than friendliness.

"Violet went out about a quarter of an hour ago," said Mrs Dallas simply. "I think she went to get some gloves, or something of that kind."

Somehow St Orme's brave heart seemed to turn to water within him. She had gone to get gloves or something when she knew that he was coming, and on what errand. Oh! was this a slight given on purpose that he might know he had not a chance of winning her, and did she wish to spare him the humiliation of an absolute refusal?

As he sat there, listening to the gay chatter

of the ladies, and the friendly clink-clink of the teacups, he tried to remember whether she had ever given him a word of distinct encouragement or not. And he was bound to confess to himself that he could not bring even one such word to memory—no, not one.

As soon as he decently could, he rose to go.

“You will wait until Violet comes home?” said Mrs Dallas. “She will not be long now,” glancing at the clock.

“Thanks many—no. I cannot stay to-day,” he answered.

“She will be so disappointed not to see you,” Mrs Dallas persisted, thinking of the look she would see in her daughter’s violet eyes when she found she had missed him. “You know you never come in before five.”

“I know that, Mrs Dallas,” with a smile which he meant to make brave, but which was only unutterably sad, “but I must go this afternoon. Say good-bye to Miss Dallas for me, won’t you? I’m sorry not to see her again. I hope you’ll all enjoy your holiday thoroughly.”

“Of course I will. But I wish you could have stayed,” said Mrs Dallas vexedly.

And then St Orme bade the two girls good-bye, and went out feeling—O God! as if the world had come to an end for him, as if it had come to an end, and yet he could not die, but must go on—on—on alone for ever in a wilderness of desolation.

CHAPTER III.

“OH, my dear,” cried Mrs Dallas, in tones of real vexation to Violet, when she came in half-an-hour later, “Lord St Orme has been here, and could not wait.”

“Could not wait!” repeated Violet blankly. “Oh!”—then with a sudden brightening of her tone, “but—but he is coming back again, Mother?”

“He did not say so, dear. I tried to make him stay, for, as I told him, I knew you’d be back by five o’clock ; but he would not, and he seemed so—so—well, abstracted.”

“Abstracted!” echoed the girl, wondering why that should be. “Oh, well, he will come back by-and-by, or come to see us off, I daresay.”

But, all the same, Violet Dallas was not quite sure about her noble lover. She knew, of course, that he was her lover—what woman does not know that when it is so? But, although she knew that he was her lover, she was not, by any means, sure that he wished to be anything else—in fact, that he wished to make her his wife.

True, he seemed to live only for her, outside the gallant profession to which he belonged ; but

then, he was an Earl—and she only a simple gentlewoman, following an art which has been more slandered by the world than even the world slanders the Devil himself. And though he might love her, the girl was not at all sure that he might want to marry her.

She was a little surprised that he had not waited to see her, because he knew so well the time that she had invariably been at home for weeks past, if she had not happened to be out where he was also, either at reception, concert, *matinée*, or some other gathering. But she was not very much disturbed about it; he would come later, or he would be at the station, or they might even find him on board the boat, a traveller like themselves to the land of the merry Swiss.

The hours went by, but there was no St Orme—they got to the station from which they started, and there was no St Orme there—the boat started from Harwich at the time appointed, but no St Orme made his appearance on the deck or in the saloon thereof. Nor yet did he come to Lucerne, where they stayed for more than a fortnight. In fact, he seemed to have slipped out of their life altogether, giving neither sign nor word why such should be.

“He was glad of the chance,” said the actress bitterly to herself—then, with a sigh—“but he might at least have broken it to me; he might have said good-bye.”

They were a month away from England, a

month during which Violet Dallas gave many and many an hour of thought to St Orme's inexplicable conduct. At first she was bitter, then the bitterness began to wear away a little, when she at once set about making excuses for him. And then, as the days passed by, her heart grew lighter and more light at the prospect of going home, and seeing him again; in her mind, the two were now synonymous.

And at last they were back in the pretty flat once more. Oh! how blithe and gay she was as she went singing from room to room, setting all in order for his coming.

And St Orme never came!

She heard after a few days that he was away, that he had gone north for pheasant-shooting.

"Never mind, he will be back soon," she said, trying to comfort herself.

But St Orme did not come. And the next news she had of him was that he had volunteered for the Soudan, and was off to join the Camel Corps at once. Then she heard that he was gone—gone without so much as a single word of farewell for her.

"What does it mean? There must be some horrible mistake," she told herself. "He liked me, I am sure, I think he loved me—and to go without a word, without a word. Oh! what can it mean?"

But no answer came to clear away the mystery! She plodded through her daily round, trying hard

to stifle regret by flinging herself heart and soul into the part she had to play night by night, until she wrung tears from the hardest and driest eyes among those who came to see her. Oh! she tried so hard to put the past blissful summer months away as if they had never been, and yet—day by day she studied the newspapers word by word, following the movements closely and lovingly of that ill-fated expedition of which he was one. Her mother and sister never mentioned him; although they only guessed at what seemed to be the truth, they believed that he had deliberately deserted her, and resented it as the mother and sister of such a girl would do. To one another they sometimes spoke of him in anger and disgust that he had brought so great a change upon Violet, but in her presence they never uttered his name.

So the weeks stole by—Christmas came and went—the old year died and the new one took its place. Here at home anxious hearts hanging on the fate of the bravest soul that has lighted up the world for centuries; and in the desert between—sent on a hope utterly forlorn, with all and everything against them, season, climate, and providings alike, fighting for dear life in the full consciousness that they who had sent them there were as indifferent to their fate as they were to the fate of the hero watching and waiting for them at Khartoum—was the flower of the British Army.

Oh! what a sad New Year it was! Even in a degree more sad for those at home than for

the brave fellows struggling through the heat, and sand, and dust, through the thirst and fatigue, the dangers and difficulties of an African desert.

It was a marvel that Violet Dallas kept up as she did through those terrible weeks, playing her part every night, lying sleepless through half and sometimes all the hours of silence, rising early to get the first sight of the newspapers, which could give her tidings of him who was more to her than all the world beside.

At last came the news of Stewart's march through the land of thirst—the battle of Abu Kru—then the account of Abu Klea. And at the foot of the short account were half-a-dozen names, among which that of St Orme stood out before the girl's weary eyes, as it were, in letters of fire. For a minute or so she did not dare to look again—then she summoned up all her courage and saw “Lord St Orme, severely wounded.”

All thought of bitterness was at an end, then; she only remembered that she loved him, that he had loved her, and that he was lying wounded, even perhaps already dead, without a comfort or a care to ease his pain, out in that accursed desert under the burning African sky!

Oh! what was it that had come between them? She thought and thought until her brain was fit to burst! If only she had been his wife now she could go out to him—If only she had been his wife, why, he should never have volunteered for

that hateful and ghastly service! Oh! what was it that had come between them?

She went over and over all the months of their intercourse, recalling every tender look, every soft and gentle word that he had given her. What could have caused the change between them? There were his little offerings still lying about the room—nothing costly, for he had never dared to run the risk of a refusal by bringing her more than trifles. There were photographs and little frames, quaint little china figures, and some music—there were books of various kinds, a copy of “Undine” (which he had brought because she had never read it), which was his very last gift excepting the yellow rosebud which she had worn the day that she had waited for him in vain.

The yellow rosebuds were gone, but the copy of “Undine” was there still. Dear, dear book that his hands had touched, that he had given her!

In her sorrow she ran across the room and took it from its place, turned to the page where she knew he had written her name—and—and—oh! *what* was that? Well, it was just an unopened letter in St Orme’s handwriting, which fell from between the pages of the “Undine,” and lay upon the ground at her feet.

She picked it up, yes, it was unopened. She tore it open—oh! she could have shrieked aloud for mingled joy and grief as she read the precious words of truest love which it contained.

How had it happened? She tried hard to recall the exact events of that day, the last they had spent in town before they went to Switzerland. She remembered that she had been very late that morning, and had eaten her breakfast alone,—how her mother had decked the room with St Orme's flowers, and had laid a few upon the "Undine" which was lying on her little table by the window. Then, how Cecily and Mary had come laughingly in, and had asked her if she had finished reading the book, and if she had found anything there, and if she had liked it? And, when she said, "Yes, very much," they had gone away laughing still.

Oh! she saw it all now! They had meant two different things by the word "it!" She had meant the yellow rosebud, and they the letter! She saw it all so clearly now. How they had meant only to tease her for a little while, to let her be disappointed that there was not that morning, as there so often was, a word from him, and then be utterly overjoyed to find that there was a letter after all.

Pretty fooling!—pretty fooling!—but it had cost her all that made life dear to her, it had sent him out into the very wilderness in despair, it had even, perhaps, sent him to his death.

How long she sat there frozen and tearless it would be hard to say. She was alone for a few days, Mrs Dallas and Cecily having gone away on a visit. The neat young parlour-maid served her

dinner, but she left it untouched ; in time she went to the Royal and played her part, how she never knew, played it like a woman in a dream.

Then home again, and all through the long and weary night with wide-open eyes feeling like balls of fire, suffering all the pain and weariness of his wounds, and yet, filled to the full with wildest joy and exultation that her darling had loved her all along, had loved her as she had loved him, all along.

And at noon of the following day, in the Camp of Abu Kru, Lord St Orme died.

It was months afterwards that Philip Messant, who had been beside his old comrade to the last, came unwillingly enough to give his friend's dying message to the girl he had loved.

" 'Tell her,' " Messant said, fixing his eyes steadfastly upon her, " 'that I always loved her. I feel now that it was some awful mistake which came to part us. But tell her I loved her to the very end.' "

She told him then all that had passed, and how she had found St Orme's letter in the "Undine" which had been almost his last gift.

"You were his friend, and I cannot let you think that I was false to him," she said. "But now you understand it all."

"And your sister?" he asked.

"Knows nothing—she never will, it would shadow all her life, and—it would do no good, he is gone."

Messant caught her hands in his, and held them in a hard grip.

"Miss Dallas," he said huskily, "the dear old fellow said, with his last breath, that *he felt* there had been a mistake ; that must be some comfort to you."

"Yes, it comforts me," she answered, "and some day he will come to meet me, and tell me what he would have told me here."

"And I doubted you," murmured Messant sadly.

"Never mind," she said simply, "you know all now."

.

Violet Dallas lives on, acts still, eats, sleeps, and even smiles sometimes. But there is a settled gravity in her manner, and a sadness in her lovely eyes which will never leave her now.

Philip Messant is her dearest friend, and the world wonders not a little about them, why she does not take him, or why he does not marry her?

Messant would be nothing loth, but he dares not tell her so, for he knows that her heart lies in a shallow grave, under the blazing African sky, and that she waits for another love story than his, told "in the climate of heaven, in the language spoken by angels."





A REGIMENTAL PREACHER.

IT was just after lunch, in the mess of the Scarlet Lancers, that Tony Hartog said to Bootles, otherwise Captain Algernon Ferrers,—

“I say, Bootles, come across to my stables and look at the old mare, will you? I really think she’s fit to do the march.”

“Very well,” Bootles answered placidly.

Now, the old mare was a special favourite of Hartog’s, and had won him many a steeplechase, and had pulled off many a garrison race on the flat as well, and usually he took her along on the march, not as a charger, but ridden by a groom. For the last few days, however, she had been a good deal out of condition, and Hartog was in two minds whether to send her to Aldershot with the dismounted party, or whether to risk her in strange stables on the line of march; he wanted the opinion of Bootles about her, for Bootles’

advice was more often followed in the Scarlet Lancers than even that of the vet. himself.

As the two men passed along the front of the officers' quarters, Hartog's roving blue eyes spied out a great pile of officers' baggage waiting to be carried off to be weighed before being despatched for Aldershot.

"I say, Bootles," he said, "let's go and get weighed."

"Very well," answered Bootles.

So they went off to the weighing-machine, and Hartog stepped thereon.

"Now, Sergeant Gilder," said he, in the cheery tones which had helped, along with his gay good-humoured dare-devilry of character, to make him one of the most popular officers in the regiment,—"now, Sergeant Gilder, let me see what I've put on since the steeplechases."

"Certainly, sir," returned the sergeant. "Brown, put on the weights up to twelve stone."

And up to twelve stone did Private Brown pile the weights, yet Hartog remained, as at the beginning, on firm ground.

"Ugh!" muttered Hartog; "just what I expected."

Bootles laughed, his usual short grim little laugh; it might have been at Hartog's disgusted face, or it might have been in correspondence with the twinkle in Sergeant Gilder's eyes.

"Put on another stone, Brown," ordered the sergeant.

Brown put on another stone.

"Oh, come now!" exclaimed Hartog, as the big lancer lifted the weight.

But it was not enough.

"This is sheer swindling," said Hartog to Bootles.

"Ha, ha!" said Bootles.

"Let's have another stone, Brown," said the sergeant.

"It'll carry two, sergeant," said the private, with a grin—a grin which was quickly reflected broadly on the faces of the half-dozen troopers standing about.

"Put on as much as it will carry," said Hartog, with a look at Bootles.

And it carried just eighteen stone ten!

"This is very queer," said Hartog.

"Not queer at all," asserted Bootles. "Er—by - the - bye, sergeant, is this regimental baggage?"

"No, sir; this is all officers'. By regimental baggage, Mr Hartog would weigh just thirteen stone ten."

"Five stone difference?"

"Five stone difference, sir," said the sergeant quietly.

"Humph! I think I'll see what my weight is. Get off, Hartog."

So Hartog got off and Bootles got on; and Bootles found that the machine weighed him at just under nineteen stone!

"Nineteen stone. Ah, very neat weight, nineteen stone. Er—where is Mr O'Sheeney?"

"Not in barracks, sir. He has just left," answered the sergeant.

"And you don't know where he is?"

"No, I do not, sir."

A great gleam of intelligence leapt up into Private Brown's handsome wooden face.

"If you please, surr," said he, "I believe as 'ow Mr O'Sheeney have gorne down town for to make 'is arrangements for 'is good-bye preaching to-night."

"Hey?" said Bootles.

"His *what?*" cried Hartog.

"His good-bye preaching, surr," explained the man, with a great show of stolidity—a stolidity belying the grin lurking about the corners of his mouth. "Mr O'Shenney, surr, has preached at the chapel of the True Gorspel every week this larst winter."

"The de—"

But there Hartog bit his remark off sharp, and Bootles laughed. The laugh emboldened Private Brown to continue his information.

"They do say, surr," he went on diffidently, "as 'ow them as preaches in the pulpit at the chapel of the True Gorspel runs a great risk of finding themselves some day let down of a suddint into the middle of their congregation."

"How?" Hartog asked eagerly.

"Why, surr, it's a very small little chapel, and

there ain't a deal of room to spare for the kind of platform thing that True Gorspel people preaches orff; so, to save space, this 'ere is set again the wall, and fastened to the houtside of the building by a couple o' strong bolts with nuts screwed on to 'em; an' they do say as 'ow, if them 'ere bolts was screwed orff—"

"Let us hope nobody will think of it," said Hartog hastily.

Bootles laughed again, thoroughly tickled by Hartog's sudden accession of dignified decorum; and Sergeant Gilder put in his word,—

"Are you sure it's *our* Mr O'Sheeney that's going to preach, Brown?" he asked; all the same, he knew well enough.

"Why, yes, sergeant; I've 'eard him many a time. They do say he does a power of good."

"I've got a bill of it 'ere, surr," spoke up another man from the rear.

"Let the capt'n see it," said the sergeant.

Forthwith the man pulled open an already loose jacket, and from the band of his overalls produced a dingy-looking paper, which he handed to Hartog, who was nearest to him.

The officers turned away, and the men saluted; yet, ere their hands were lowered from their forage-caps, the laughter, which had been struggling to come for ten minutes, bubbled out.

Meanwhile, Bootles and Hartog had reached the friendly shelter of the stables, where Hartog's new-found dignity and decorum gave way, and he

pulled out the handbill referring to Mr O'Sheeney, fairly screaming with laughter and delight.

"By Jove! it was fine, it was fine! I've seen and heard a good many fine things since I've been in the Scarlet Lancers, but anything so grand as old O'Sheeney stuck up on a platform preaching the True Gospels, never entered my mind. Oh, by Jove! but it is grand! I wonder if he preaches against sand in the sugar, and thumbs in the beer? I wonder if he preaches against bribery and corruption, against loaded scales and the like? I can't see the difference myself between loaded scales and loaded dice."

Hartog unfolded the precious bill, and spread it out, holding it up against the side of a stall; for it was limp and greasy, having been apparently carried for some days within the band of its owner's overalls. It ran thus:—

"LITTLE BETHEL.

THE CHAPEL OF THE TRUE GOSPEL,
St Mark's Gate, Blankhampton.

A GOOD-BYE SERMON
will be preached by

ST MICHAEL ANTHONY O'SHEENEY, ESQ.
(the Scarlet Lancers),

on the eve of his departure from the city,

Monday, May 17, 1880, at 7.45 p.m.,

when all members are earnestly invited to attend.

Subject:—HONESTY THE BEST POLICY."

Hartog fairly yelled. Bootles, holding the paper against the wall with one hand, smoothed

it out with his whip. "Ah," he said at last, in a reflective tone, "ah, Little Bethel, the Chapel of the True Gorspel, in St Mark's Gate, at 7.45 p.m. Yes, I think I really must go and hear O'Sheeney on 'Honesty the best policy.' I really must. Now—" and here he turned and looked at Hartog in a wise, contemplative kind of way—"if we could not only have the pleasure and profit of hearing O'Sheeney (the old sinner!) point out the ways of a good man and the shortest cut he can take to heaven, but also chanced to come in for the divertisement of seeing those bolts give way, and O'Sheeney come down like a spread eagle into the midst of the elect, why, it would make a very fair evening's amusement, and be an ample compensation or the loss of our dinner, hey?"

"Yes, yes, of course—splendid; but how can you manage it?"

"First, by getting out of this," glancing down at his uniform; "then by going straight along to the chapel of the True Gorspel and reconnoitring. If those nuts can be got at, we can very easily decide what to do."

It was not long before they were passing through the gates on their way to the town, nor was it much longer before they discovered the whereabouts of "Little Bethel, the chapel of the true Gospel."

It was a little old-fashioned building of red brick, square in form, and standing back from the quiet street of St Mark's Gate in a small en-

closure, securely railed in from the outer world. It was a very unpretending edifice, and a quaint little porch and small diamond-paned leaded windows, few in number and at a good height from the ground.

"Those windows must have been built for our purpose," remarked Bootles, eyeing them with satisfaction.

"I wonder where the pulpit is?" said Hartog disconsolately.

Poor Tony Hartog! He was an uncommonly fine fellow, but his was not a brilliant brain, and for the life of him he did not see how on earth they were to get over or through that railing; for of course it would not do to be seen, and unless the nuts could be reached within an hour or so, the evening's entertainment, with all its novelty and point, would be nowhere.

"Sure to be opposite to the door," answered Bootles. "Now, I wonder who lives in those houses at the back?" They could just see the backs of some houses apparently looking on to the chapel enclosure. "Let us go down here, Tony, and see if we can find out."

Hartog wheeled round, hope renewed in his broad breast, and they sauntered carelessly round the corner, and turned into the more busy and bustling street which runs parallel with St Mark's Gate.

Bootles took the bearings of the place.

"Ah, linen-draper's. That's no good, and too

high up into the bargain. Let us go further down, Tony. Ah, here you are!"

Hartog looked up in surprise, and saw a small shop-window set out with fruit and flowers and the choicer kinds of vegetables, while in the background there were piles of the more ordinary sorts—cabbages, onions, potatoes, cauliflowers, and the like.

"Come along," said Bootles; "this must be one of those overlooking the enclosure."

He stepped into the shop, followed by Hartog, and there came out to meet them a keen-faced elderly woman, with black hair and a pair of very bright black eyes.

"Good-morning, gentlemen," she said in a quick sharp voice.

"Good-morning," said Bootles. "Have you any peaches?"

She came round the small counter, and dusted two chairs with her apron.

"Pray sit down, gentlemen," she urged. "I've not had the pleasure of seeing you here before; and I'm always proud when the gentlemen from the barracks come to see me."

"Er—thanks," returned Bootles, with a touch to the brim of his hat; "er—but how do *you* know we belong to the barracks?"

"Dear sir," she cried, with a laugh and a glance of her black eyes, "I haven't served the officers' mess for ten years without knowing an officer when I see one."

"Oh, you're Mrs Forrest?"

"Yes, sir, I am."

"Ah, I believe you've got my name on your books—Captain Ferrers?"

"Yes, sir, I have, and very proud to serve you. Perhaps I know the other gentleman, too?"

"Yes, I'm sure you do," said Tony—"Mr Hartog."

"Very pleased to see you, sir. I only wish you had come a little earlier. Well, gentlemen, what will you take? Peaches? No-o, not yet. I have fine apricots, pines, and lovely grapes."

"Grapes," said Bootles.

"Apricots," said Hartog.

So one started on the apricots and the other on the grapes, while the widow stood and regaled them with odds and ends of gossip of former regiments and officers whom they had known. And presently, when Bootles had eaten nearly a pound of grapes, he remarked,—

"You've got a chapel behind you, Mrs Forrest."

"Yes, sir."

"Go to it yourself?" taking an apricot.

"Law, no, sir!" she cried. "I was brought up respectable; I'm Church of England."

"I am very glad to hear it," said Bootles gravely; "you look like it. And er—do you *like* having that chapel there?"

"*Like* it!" echoed the widow scornfully.

"Ah, I daresay they disturb you a great deal," said Bootles sympathetically; at which Hartog,

who at last began to see the drift of this procedure, laughed aloud.

"You may laugh, sir," Mrs Forrest cried, unable to help laughing herself, "but if you heard them howling morning, noon, and night, week in week out, as I do, why, you wouldn't exactly *like* having them there either."

"To be sure not," said Bootles gravely, while Hartog nearly killed himself by trying to smother his unseemly mirth.

"You see, sir," the widow continued to Bootles, "this is only a little place, but it suits me and my son, being just large enough for us. I've a good kitchen, and a nice little parlour, and three good bedrooms and a dressing-room above. I've often had gentlemen here for a few weeks, when changes were being made in the staff, or when the militia were up and the infantry barracks too full to take them all in. And then I sometimes have married gentlemen, who have come a few weeks before their ladies: if they have been quartered here before, or anyone has recommended them to come to me, why, they prefer a bed here and taking their meals at the mess to being at a hotel or in regular lodgings. The lodging-house people about here are so common," she ended, with contempt, "they don't know what gentlefolks require." She paused a moment for breath, and went on again. "But, oh dear, it overlooks the chapel-yard, and we scarcely know what peace is!"

"Must be awfully bad to put up with,—a fearful

nuisance," said Bootles feelingly. "Then I suppose you could easily get into the yard from one of your windows, if you liked?"

"Oh yes, sir!"

"Ah! Er—do any other windows besides your own overlook it?"

"Not any. Well, the windows of two houses do," she added hastily, "but one is empty, and the other has all the windows filled with shaded glass."

"Why?"

"Because they have the whole house for business purposes—for millinery, which is not any the better for sunlight, sir."

"Ah, yes, I see. Well, Mrs Forrest," leaning his arms on the counter, and looking at her with a very serene and childlike expression on his placid face, "the fact is, one of our officers—at least, that is to say our quarter-master—is going to preach in there to-night," jerking his thumb in the direction of the chapel.

Mrs Forrest leaned with her two hands upon the counter, and regarded him with intense and almost breathless interest.

"Well, sir?" she said eagerly, finding that he paused.

"Well, I'm told that the pulpit is a kind of platform arrangement, and that it has no real connection with the steps that lead to it, but is held in position by a couple of strong bolts passed right through the wall, and fastened on the outside by screw-nuts."

The widow was sharper of wit than handsome Hartog, and her keen face fairly shone with intelligence and delight. She seemed to grasp the situation in the twinkling of an eye.

"And you want to get at the nuts—oh, sir!—and you want to let him down in the middle of his sermon!" she cried.

Bootles laughed.

"Well?" he said inquiringly.

"Well," said the widow, "you're as welcome to go through my kitchen window as the sunshine. But, sir, won't the weight of the platform bring it down before ever he gets on to it?"

Bootles looked rather done, and Hartog seeing that, let his jaw drop till his face was as long as a fiddle.

"For you would like to be inside at the time, wouldn't you, gentlemen?" she continued.

"Yes, of course," answered both, in the same breath.

"Then the nuts should not be unscrewed," said Mrs Forrest wisely, "until the sermon has well begun. Now, I have a very mischievous son, gentlemen, just twenty years old, who is uncommonly clever at that kind of thing; he would think nothing of slipping in and taking those nuts off and then racing off to the other side of the town so as to prove he was not at home when it happened. He would perhaps get five or ten minutes' start before the bolts gave way at all."

"By Jove!" cried Bootles, roused for once into

intense excitement "I'll give him a sovereign if he succeeds."

"Oh, he would do it for pure mischief," returned the widow; "but, of course, to a young fellow like him, a sovereign is a great thing."

"He shall have two," put in Hartog.

"He is the very one to do it," said Bootles decidedly, putting aside the widow's expression of thanks. "But we had better make quite sure that the bolts are in good working order, and will turn easily. I brought a pair of pincers in my pocket. Have you any oil, Mrs Forrest?"

"Law, yes, sir, a bottle full, if you want it. Come this way, gentlemen; you'll get through this window the easiest," said Mrs Forrest.

She led them into a clean, bright kitchen, the window of which was large and wide.

Bootles put his head out to make sure that the coast was clear, took the bottle of oil, then got through the window and ran across the short space between it and the chapel wall. Yes, there were the nuts, just on a level with his eyes; they seemed rusty and not inclined to move, so he went back to the window.

"Give me a stool," he said, 'for I can't quite reach them.'

However, when he had a stool he found it quite another thing, and the application of a little oil, together with the use of his pincers, soon brought the nuts to a sense of their proper duty, so that they turned to and fro at his will

as easily as if they were just new out of the shop. Then, having got them into what he considered good working order, Bootles betook himself and the stool back into Mrs Forrest's kitchen.

"Now, you must impress one thing very plainly on your son's mind, Mrs Forrest," he said, as a last instruction, "and that is that he lets the sermon get fairly begun before he takes the nuts off."

"He won't spoil it, sir," she assured him: "you may leave it as it is, and it will be done. I wonder that boy of mine has not thought of it before; if he had, he would have done it, for he's a regular mischief."

"Then that's all right," said Bootles, with satisfaction.

It was nearly six o'clock when they got back to barracks, and after a warning to Hartog to say nothing about the little affair arranged for the evening, Bootles went the round of the barracks, or rather of the officers' quarters, beating up recruits to go and hear their dear old friend O'Sheeney preach on "Honesty the best policy." The news was received with considerable astonishment, though there was a similarity in the comments fatal to St Anthony Michael O'Sheeney, Esquire's, excellence of character.

"What!" cried one, "what! That old thief O'Sheeney preaching — preaching on honesty! Go and hear him? Yes, by Jove! I rather think I will. Yes, by Jove! I'll wear the diamond pin he tried to swindle me out of that last time he

was acting Adjutant, to prevent him peaching to the Colonel because I had not turned out for early stables one morning I was on duty. By Jove, yes, it's a fact ; the old thief tried it on, but I told him I'd report him if he reported me—that I'd tell the Chief, on my word as an officer and a gentleman, that he offered to accept a diamond pin to say nothing about it. Honesty the best policy—I like that, the swindling old vagabond!”

“O'Sheeney going to preach! O Lord!” exclaimed another. “What about?”

“Honesty the best policy,” said Bootles dryly.

“O'Sheeney going to preach on *honesty*?” he cried, in amazement. “’Pon my soul, that will be a case of the pot calling the kettle black. Go? Yes, rather! I wouldn't miss it for five pounds, and I'm desperately hard up just now.”

Bootles went on his way rejoicing, for on all hands the same exclamations and comments greeted his invitation; not a man who heard of the preaching but gladly and willingly promised to make one of the company to assemble that evening at 7.45 in Little Bethel, the chapel of the True Gospel. Therefore, some ten or twelve minutes before that time, the gathering of the godly were struck all of a heap to see nine well-dressed, and for the most part fine and handsome men enter the chapel and modestly request that they might be given seats.

That they did not belong to the followers of the True Gospel was evident from the fact that

when they had disposed of their hats all the nine hid their faces behind their gloved hands. Then one or two of the girls of the congregation, who had been casting shy and fluttered glances at the strangers, volunteered the information to their elders that they were officers from the barracks, which, of course, to the simple minds of the elect, amply accounted for their appearance in the little chapel.

Now it happened that the officers, being about the most distinguished strangers who had ever set foot in Little Bethel, were not stowed away in odd nooks and corners, as was the common custom in that chapel, but were conducted to a high place and post of honour just in front of the platform from which presently St Anthony Michael O'Sheeney, Esq., would expound his views on "Honesty the best policy," where, besides being the observed of all observers, they might be the observers of all there might be to observe.

Hartog, when he had straightened his back and settled himself on the comfortable cushions of his seat, looked round upon the building and its occupants, and as his eyes ran along the crowded gallery which ran round three sides of the edifice, his eyebrows raised themselves perceptibly, and his elbow took a trip into Bootles' ribs. Bootles sat next to him.

"Half the regiment is here," he whispered. "How on earth did they get scent of it?"

Bootles looked round solemnly. Yes, there was

a very fair sprinkling of red coats among the more sombre garments of the elect. He shrugged his shoulders about as much as Hartog had raised his eyebrows, and fixed his serene gaze upon the doomed platform before him.

The platform was a square-topped affair of well polished mahogany, like a big bracket or a console-table, and was reached by four neatly-carpeted steps, evidently of separate and distinct existence from the eminence to which they led. Along the front and on one side there was a slight iron railing with a mahogany hand-rail.

"So far so good," said Bootles to himself; and then there were signs of the service being about to begin.

First, by the appearance of St Anthony Michael O'Sheeney, Esquire, in a frock coat and white tie, who was ushered in between two black-coated men, common-looking fellows both, though the white tie of one showed him to be the pastor of the flock. O'Sheeney's solemn and righteous countenance was well-nigh too much for the gravity of Hartog and one or two of the Scarlet Lancer youngsters, and the start he gave when he perceived the goodly show the regiment had made upon the auspicious occasion brought a ghost of a laugh to disturb the habitual serenity of Bootles' good-looking impassive face.

The service began with the singing of a hymn, given out two lines at a time by the pastor, and sung by the people out of books which they all

seemed perfectly able to read. This done, a prayer followed, or, to speak with truth, an address to the Almighty, long, fervid, not to say impassioned, slightly dictatorial, and distinctly extempore. Then there was a lesson, followed by another hymn sung as before. Then another prayer, another hymn, and then there was a dead silence whilst St Anthony Michael O'Sheeney, Esquire, ascended to the platform. A glance was sufficient to show that he was painfully nervous. He shuffled about on his feet, and looked anywhere and everywhere but at the nine interested faces just in front of him. Without doubt it was a particularly trying position for him to be in, for there was nothing but the wall behind him and the slight railing in front of him—nowhere that he could hide nervous hands, no hassock on which to rest nervous feet, nothing behind which to hide half his nervous body. No, there he stood exposed to the straight and merciless gaze of nine pairs of hostile eyes, which had come there wholly and solely to witness his humiliation and discomfort.

However, he could not stand there looking like a fool, so he cleared his throat, and referring to a paper in his hand, made an announcement in an exceedingly hoarse and shaky voice:

"The offerings of the congregation to-night, my brethren, will be given to the Society for the spread of the True Gospel in 'eathen England."

In his excitement he dropped an aspirate, and

perceiving it he made up for the defect by promptly adding one on to the next word.

“By 'eathen Hengland,” he continued, “is meant those masses of the Protestant Church who are blindly rushing along the ruinous road which leads to the accursed slavery of the power of the Pope, and ends”—here he caught Bootles' grave attentive eyes, and lost his nerve, his voice, and something else at the same moment—“and ends in 'ell.”

A murmur of self-righteous sympathy ran through the chapel of the True Gospel, and the plates of shining, well-polished Britannia metal promptly went after it. There was a sweet chink-chink of falling coins, not the least weighty or welcome being the broad silver pieces contributed by the nine 'eathens, who, it must be confessed, had come to scoff, and did not, any of them, so far, seem inclined for remaining to pray. Then, the collection being finished, the sea of hard work-a-day faces settled themselves to listen with all attention to the discourse on “Honesty the best policy.”

There was a short pause, and a shower of coughs.

“There is an old saying,” began St Anthony Michael O'Sheeney, Esquire, “which says, ‘Honesty is the best policy.’ My dear friends, it is the *only* policy. You ask, what is *honesty*?”—he gave each letter of the word its full value—“and I tell you it is *honesty* that keeps the head of the world above the waters of the ‘Slough of Despond’; it

is *honesty* that takes away the taint out of the sinks of iniquity ; it is *honesty* that makes men do right in the hour of temptation ; it is *honesty* that enables a man to stand up in the face of his fellow-men, and say, ' I have fought the good fight ' ; it is *honesty* that makes that man keep from boasting of his good works, remembering the words of the great and oft-tried apostle, '*Let every man that standeth take heed lest he—*' "

But the sermon was cut short by a very practical illustration of the words even then upon his tongue. Up to that moment he had come along as fluently and flourishingly as ever ; then there was a sudden lurch forward of his vantage-ground, a sudden sprawl of the preacher, a scream from the women, a gasp from the men, and in less time than it takes me to write a third of my own name, wall and platform had parted company, and St Anthony Michael O'Sheeney, Esquire, had descended like a dove, or a spread eagle, and was lying grovelling on his dishonest old face on the floor of Little Bethel.

In the confusion which followed in the fuss of his being gathered up and borne tenderly into the vestry, the Scarlet Lancers made their escape, Bootles having, for the sake of decency, ascertained that he was no worse than a trifle shaken, and in a towering rage.

And oh, what a rage he was in ! As soon as he was able to return to barracks, he made his way to Bootles' quarters, passionately accusing

him of being what he called the ringleader in the disgraceful and profane insult, and promising in good round terms to make a full report of the whole affair to the Colonel so soon as he should be in the office in the morning.

Bootles replied calmly, and to the point.

“You can please yourself about that, of course, Mr O’Sheeney,” he said quietly, to the delight of the fellows who were present; “but I rather fancy the Colonel will require you to-morrow morning before you have occasion to seek him. I had the pleasure, Mr O’Sheeney, of being weighed this afternoon on the scales in use for weighing officers’ baggage. I scaled just under nineteen stone; my weight an hour later on a less *interested* balance was eleven-stone-eleven. Curious—eh?”

“It’s a lie!” shouted the quarter-master furiously, as he turned to leave the room.

“I’ll thank you, Mr O’Sheeney,” said Bootles, with provoking politeness, “not to use that kind of language to me; *and*,” in a considerably higher and more forcible tone, “you needn’t trouble to go and alter those scales—they are under lock and key and a strict guard. I fancy that to-morrow we shall see a striking illustration of your text that ‘honesty is the best policy.’”





A WOMAN'S VALOUR.

IT was after the final suppression of the terrible mutiny in 1858, that, on the recommendation of Dr Mouat, a group of thickly-wooded islands lying towards the east side of the Bay of Bengal was selected as suitable for the formation of a penal settlement for Sepoy mutineers and other criminals.

These are the Andaman Islands, covering an area of about one hundred and fifty miles in length by eighteen miles in breadth.

There are three great islands—North, Middle, and South Andaman—separated by narrow straits, and there is a number of smaller ones, of which the most northerly are the Great and Little Cocos, thus named from the large number of cocoanut trees which grow upon them. From there to Port Blair the Calcutta steamer has to thread its

way through many small islets, some of which rise to a great height out of the water, and are clothed from their topmost peaks to the water's edge with the most luxuriant and lovely verdure.

The chief settlement, Port Blair, is situated on the eastern coast of South Andaman, at the head of an inlet of the sea which forms a magnificent harbour nine miles in length. In this harbour are three islands, the first and largest of which is Ross, which lies just across its mouth. Ross is the capital of the settlements, and contains the Government House, the principal storehouses and some well-cultivated plots of land, also the barracks for the European soldiers.

Then, three miles further up the harbour still, lies Viper Island, where all "the very bad 'uns" are kept, it being reserved almost entirely as a punishment station for the most unmanageable and refractory of the convicts. Since the year 1869 only those convicts who have been condemned to life-sentences have been sent here, the number of them averaging between six and seven hundred in a year.

The products of the islands include wood of sufficient size for use in shipbuilding, cotton, and sugar. The convicts are employed in clearing and preparing ground for building purposes, in unloading cargoes, in salt-making, and in cutting firewood.

By the work of the convicts, what was once almost a desert has been made fertile and beautiful.

Three miles further up the harbour is Chatham Island, an exquisite little gem of beauty and gorgeous verdure and colouring, somewhat marred, unfortunately, by the presence of saw-mills, which have the ugliness which usually attends that class of building.

Yet this was not thought much of a place by a friend of the author, who inhabited it for a time, for, on moving from it to one at Haddo, on the so-called mainland, he writes :—

“Since my last to you, a change has come over the spirit of my dream. I have moved my quarters from Viper Island to Haddo. My new house here is really a magnificent one, and has been built only about three years. It is situated on a high eminence commanding most extensive views for miles around, from Port Mouat and the winding creeks on the south and west, past Mount Harriett on the north, to Ross and the open sea.

“This sounds nothing in words, but you should see it, as I do from my bedroom or front veranda, when the sun is rising over the sparkling sea, and the night mists are clinging still to the wooded mountain slopes, while in the foreground the feathery palms tremble against the purple haze in the early morning breeze.

“I am at present beautifying the approaches to the house, as for any gardening purposes I have only to send to the neighbouring hospitals or asylums, to have forty or fifty men for as long as I want them. I have had the entire front and

sides of the bungalow turfed, leaving neat paths covered with white gravel. Below the embankment are cut a series of flower beds, in which are planted ornamental trees and flowers. The rest of the compound, about ten acres, I have cleared of all trees except the cocoa-nuts, limes, almonds and plantains; the ground has been cleared of jungle and will soon be green turf.

“By-the-bye, I send you a group of my servants, taken by a sergeant of the —th Regiment, with such poor materials as he could obtain in Ross. They are all convicts, excepting the two standing immediately beside me. Those in dark turbans are the rowers of the boat, which takes me from one island to another, and the men at the extreme right and left of the group are both murderers.”

Speaking of Mount Harriett, it was from the summit of that eminence that poor Lord Mayo, the most popular of modern Viceroy, —just before he was so cruelly stabbed to death on the jetty at Hope Town by the knife of an Afghan condemned to penal servitude for life, in punishment for a murder he had committed on the British side of the North-West Frontier, —declared the view one of beauty he had never seen surpassed, and foretold a great future for the Andaman Settlements.

The Andamans are exceptionally healthy, the climate being very genial, with cool sea breezes prevailing during the greater part of the year. The rainy season is from May to October.

Not nearly so well favoured, though endowed by nature with exceeding fertility and beauty, is the group of nine islands called the Nicobars, which, in 1869—after repeated attempts at colonisation had failed, owing to the prevalence of yellow fever—was made the destination of several drafts of convicts from the Andamans, under the charge of a company of native soldiers, and the new settlement was affiliated to the great penal colony at Port Blair.

Great efforts were made to render the islands more healthy, and extensive drainage and other sanitary works were put in operation to that end.

They are, however, subject to frequent hurricanes, and the rainy season lasts nine months in the year, besides which there are frequent falls of heavy rain during the dry season from February to December (December to February, I mean), rendering the climate an exceedingly difficult one to fight against.

But the Nicobars are, as I said before, remarkably fertile, their hilly surfaces being covered with trees, while cocoanuts, oranges, sugar, bamboos, and tobacco grow in the greatest abundance. It is therefore hoped, as the harbours are very good and the soil so highly fertile, that ere long a very flourishing settlement will be formed here.

But as the Andamans are, and for ever will be, stained by the memory of the cruel death of the great and noble-hearted man who, in the dusk of the evening, fell by the hand of a stranger to

satisfy a vengeance against the whole European race, so must the Nicobars—the sister settlement—ever call to mind one of the saddest and yet one of the most glorious stories which ever has been or ever can be told of woman's heroism and true valour.

It was in the last months of 1883, at Kamorta, the capital of the settlements, that a havildar, or sergeant, belonging to the 2nd Madras Native Infantry—thirty of whom, with a like number of police under a native chief constable, were in charge of some two hundred convicts—was brought before the officer in command of the station, a Danish gentleman called de Roepsterff, belonging to the Indian Civil Uncovenanted Service. The charge was one of appropriating cocoa-nuts, and was preferred by a watchman whom the havildar, a man of thirty years' service, had struck in return for making it in the first instance, and promptly arrested.

The following day, however, Mr de Roepsterff began an investigation of the charge, and having heard the evidence for the prosecution, adjourned the case until the next day, in order that the havildar might produce his witnesses.

Perhaps the havildar had no witnesses to produce, and knew that his theft was in truth detected—or it may be that he was furious that justice was shown to the watchman and his charge investigated—we know not; only, shortly afterwards, while Mr de Roepsterff was riding past the

native infantry barracks, with his orderly and groom in attendance, he was shot by the havildar from the window of his room, and received the charge between his shoulders, the bullet coming out at his breast.

It was all over then, poor fellow ; all over, though he still had a few minutes to live—a few minutes of agony of body and mind, for he knew he was leaving his dearly-loved wife at the mercy of that lawless crew. His last words were for her : “ Take care—do not be confused—take care of the Mem-sahib or she will be shot too.”

Poor dying husband—faithful to the very end, full of care for her, though the life-blood was welling out in great gasps, and the darkness of death was fast gathering over his eyes ! And poor, poor gentle wife, riding immediately behind, who saw him throw up his arms and fall to the ground, who slid from her horse too late even *to hear* those few last words of tender care for her safety, though not too late for a last look from the eyes she loved best on earth ! Poor wife, one moment riding joyously along, thinking perhaps of the great and loving work upon which she and that strong, wise, true man before her were then engaged—the translation of the Bible into the Nicobarese language—and almost the next to find herself a widow, with three hundred miles of sea between her and any other white face, except that dear dead one lying on the ground before her.

It was the sight of that and the fear of de

separation to that dear body, which nerved her to meet the dangers of perhaps the most deplorable position any woman, gentle or simple, was ever placed in. But meet them she did—grandly, nobly, unflinchingly. Not a sign of fear did she show to the cowardly Orientals by whom she was surrounded; not a sign of fear of the two hundred or more dangerous convicts who had to be kept in order, though there was never a prison to keep them in; not a sign of fear of the bad feeling which she knew only too well existed between the men of the Madras Infantry and the Sikh police to a very dangerous extent—dangerous always, but infinitely more dangerous now that the strong will and authority of the commanding officer were gone and every restraining influence, except that of one single woman, removed.

“Let the sahib be taken to the bungalow,” was her first order; then, as the second report of a rifle rang out upon the air, asked, “What is that?”

It proved to be the last earthly act of the miserable havildar, who had reloaded his rifle and had blown out his brains before he could be arrested. His victim's widow must have been relieved that it was so, for she had then one less turbulent spirit to keep at bay.

“Let the sahib be taken to the bungalow,” she said.

But, having reached the now dark and desolated home, she might not sit down and weep over her dead. Nor did she. No! no! She must be up

and doing, for there was work to do, and her brave and noble soul did not shirk one iota of the responsibility which had fallen upon her.

She immediately despatched a native craft, which chanced to be in the harbour, to bear the tidings of what had befallen her husband, and the position in which she herself was placed, to the Commanding Officer at Port Blair, sending a couple of the Sikh police to bear the message. Then she had the last sad offices of respect paid to her husband's body, and assumed entire command of the station, causing all reports to be made to her, and issuing all orders with a firmness and discretion such as made her complete mistress of the situation.

But six or seven slow and weary days, full of anxiety and suspense, dragged themselves over before a steamer from Port Blair arrived. On board of her was Major Protheroe, acting commandant at Port Blair, who was accompanied by the chaplain and several other officers; so Madame de Roepsterff was at once relieved of her terrible responsibilities. And then, poor thing—grand, patient, enduring soul as she had proved hers to be—what wonder that the brave and valourous heroine melted into the weak and sorrow-stricken woman? What wonder—her awful task at an end, the tension relieved, further suspense over—that, as the chaplain's measured tones stole out over the quiet grave, she broke down utterly and cast herself in an agony of grief upon the mound

beneath which she must leave sleeping for ever the light and joy of her life ?

But no—not for ever ; only for a little space—and then may the brave broken heart and the true tender one, meet once more in that bright world up yonder, where parting and sorrow can never come between them any more for ever.





B E T T Y.

A DAY—JULY 10TH, 1847.



It was a brilliant morning. The July sun shone down over the peaceful little village of Rest, and the parson thereof was standing on the well-kept gravelled path just outside the Rectory door. He was reading a letter—a pleasant one, I fancy; for there was a smile on his face, which lingered there even after he had folded it up and replaced it in its envelope: it deepened yet more as the gate was pushed open, and a tall, straight, well-set-up boy of fourteen or fifteen years old advanced towards him. This boy was young Tom Adair, the Squire of Rest.

“Well, Tom,” said the jovial parson genially, “you’re early this morning. Come to breakfast, eh?”

Tom Adair laughed.

"Yes, if Mrs Trevor asks me," he replied, with a schoolboy tip of his hat; "though I didn't come for that, but to bring Betty a present for her birthday."

"Go inside, then," said Mr Trevor, laughing. "You'll find Betty raving over the offerings that have already turned up."

Thus bidden, the lad went into the house, turning, with the accustomed manner of one who knew the place and was not wont to stand on ceremony, into a large and very cheerful room on the right of the principal door of entrance.

"Betty," said he.

At the sound of his voice a child turned from the table at which she was standing—a very fair and lovely child, surely just such a one as caused the exclamation from Gregory the Great more than thirteen hundred years ago, "*Angeli, non Angli*"—a very dainty, fairy-like, and fragile child, with hair like spun gold, eyes blue and bright as the blue heavens, in which at that moment the sun shone like a diamond in a bed of sapphires; a child with a face which would have been perfectly regular in feature, had not the nose had the sauciest little upward turn. Her eyebrows and lashes were brown, her skin very clear and smooth, and fine as ivory, white as porcelain, and with the faintest dash of apple-blossom pink across the cheeks.

She turned from the table to meet him.

"Oh, Tom," she said eagerly, "I was just wishing

for you this moment. I've got such a lot of presents. Look here! Grandpapa has sent me a watch—a real one; look at it! See, this is the key—that's gold, too. And Aunt Mary has sent me a chain; she hopes I'll take care of it, for it was Granny's. Father has given me a sovereign—a whole sovereign, Tom, a new one; Mother, a chain for my locket; Uncle Bob, five shillings, because he didn't know *what* to buy; Uncle Jack, a colley-pup; and Uncle Geoff, a writing-case, all fitted up, seal and wax and *everything*—isn't it a beauty? And Aunt Joan has sent me—a *doll*!"

Tom burst out laughing.

"What, hasn't she made a change yet? I vote we have a little fun out of the old thing this time. Let's have an execution," he suggested; "it will be no end of a lark, she must have meant it for that—Miss Joan, I mean; she couldn't expect you to *play* with it"—in tones of contempt quite as profound as Betty's.

Mrs Trevor laughed indulgently.

"Ah, poor Aunt Joan! It is well she does not know what a hoyden her only niece is—a hoyden who utterly despises dolls, and prefers climbing walls and trees to setting her doll's-house in order," she said, smoothing Betty's golden hair caressingly.

"She knows I hate dolls," broke in Betty indignantly.

"What with your daddy's spoiling, and what with your having no friend but Tom, I'm afraid,

Betty, you have grown up in what Aunt Joan calls a shocking manner."

"Then what would she approve of?" Tom Adair asked, really by way of gaining information; for he happened never to have seen Miss Joan Bowers.

Mrs Trevor laughed again.

"A nice, meek, well-behaved little damsel, who would never object to sew her seam diligently, but be industrious and careful, and play decorously with her doll afterwards; who would never make a noise, keep all her drawers in perfect order, all her toys unbroken, know her Catechism thoroughly, never have a dirty face, never tear her frock, never—"

But there Mrs Trevor's enumeration came to an end, put to a violent death by Betty's two soft arms flung round her neck.

"Dear Mammie, you wouldn't like me to be such a mean little sneak, would you now?" she cried. "Why, I believe you would just *hate* me!"

"I believe I should—I'm sure your daddy would," the mother answered. "And now, my chickie, let me go; I want to pour out the coffee. Tom, my dear, have you come to breakfast?"

"I will have some, please, Mrs Trevor," Tom answered; "though I really came to bring Betty a birthday present; only she has got so very many that I—"

"Show me," interrupted Betty imperatively; "show me, this very minute, dear darling Tom!"

Thus encouraged, Tom produced from his jacket-pocket a little box, which on being opened was found to contain a small cross of gold some two inches in length, and richly chased on one side; on the reverse, which was plain, was engraved, "Tom to Betty, July 10th, 1847."

Betty held the pretty trinket at arm's length, and, having rapturously admired it, rushed up to the lad, and flung her arms about him, in all the abandonment of sweet childhood.

"I love you, Tom—you are a darling!" she cried, holding up her mouth to be kissed.

Young Tom just brushed his cheek for an instant against hers, reddening a little—for he had the true masculine horror of a scene; then with a breath of decided relief, pushed her gently towards the table, and drew a chair near for himself.

"I will always wear it," said Betty, still regarding the cross. "I will wear it on my chain; I love it "

Very soon, however, her thoughts reverted to the doll. It was a gift which repeated itself twice each year—on her birthday and at Christmas—a gift which, with each renewal, seemed to come more and more in the light of a studied insult. A doll! As if she wanted to nurse and hug a doll—a thing of wax and sawdust, a thing with two great staring eyes that wouldn't even shut—a thing with a fixed and stupid grin on its stupid waxen face—a thing that had two vexa-

tious misshapen legs stuffed with sawdust, and embellished with in-toed club feet! Betty was indeed indignant. Her uncle Jack's present of a colley-pup was a present worth having; her uncle Bob's five shillings a sensible way of remembering her birthday; her uncle Geoff's writing-desk a possession to be proud of; her watch and chain and golden cross—why, they were quite grown-up young lady presents, all of them. But this—this *doll*! as Betty witheringly called it—it was simply too contemptible to consider in the light of a birthday present at all; in fact, it had made her very angry indeed.

“What shall we do with her, Tom?” she asked, as she ate the last spoonful of her egg and nodding towards the doll to show she was speaking of it. “Let's hang her.”

“Or shoot her,” suggested Tom. “We could rig her up to a tree, and do William Tell beautifully—stick a ripe gooseberry on her head with a pin through it, for the apple.”

“Or suppose we burn her for a witch,” cried Betty—she had just been reading an interesting episode in history describing that process—“it would be splendid! How she would melt! I should not wonder if she did not fizz-z!”

“Yes; but it would be all up with her then,” Tom objected; “and we should scarcely get any fun out of her at all, for she would burn in no time. We might drown her first: they always did that with witches, you know—stuck 'em in a

sack, and if they sank swore 'em innocent, and made saints of them—what do you call it, Mr Trevor?"

"Canonised them," the Rector answered.

"Yes; canonised them; but if they floated," Tom went on impressively, "they burnt them for witches. Now, how would that do? She'd be sure to float."

"Yes; and then we might guillotine her," Betty cried excitedly. "We'll get Cookie to lend us her big chopper, and we'll have two big posts and a string, and then—scurr-r, smash!—down it will come! How would that do, Tom?"

From this it will be seen that Miss Betty was a young person of great powers of adaption.

"It will do splendidly," Tom answered. "We'll hang her first, and then float her, William Tell her next, try the chopping business afterwards, and wind up with a bonfire."

"Oh, but she'd be dead," Betty objected. "I don't know, though, that that would make much matter; we should have to pretend she was alive any way—it's *all* pretence with a doll, stupid thing! Tom, do you see my cake? Cookie made it on purpose for my birthday. Isn't it lovely? But we're not to cut it till after dinner."

"Oh, gorgeous!" Tom answered, handing his cup to Mrs Trevor to be refilled; then added suddenly, "I say, Betty, I vote we blow her up."

"What, Cookie?" opening her blue eyes very widely at his suggestion.

"No; that beauty over there," nodding towards the doll sitting simpering on a chair.

"Like the wops'-nest?" Betty cried excitedly. "Oh, yes, do let us! We'll get old Jimmy to do it for us; he has heaps of powder. But, Tom, you'll do all the other things first, won't you? We may as well get all the fun we can out of the thing."

Mrs Trevor looked across the table at the Rector in a way that made the jovial parson burst into shouts of uproarious laughter.

"The result of sister Joan's puritanical way of bringing you up," he said. "Bless the child! I wish the old cat could hear her!"

"Hush-sh, my dear!" remonstrated his wife gently.

"Daddy is quite right," remarked Betty, as she helped herself to jam, and speaking with an absurd air of wisdom, contrasting oddly with her little fairy-like person—for she was small for her nine summers. "Daddy is quite right. Aunt Joan is an old cat—no mistake about it."

The copy of her father's mature tone of deliberation was so perfect that her three hearers went into fits of laughter, the Rector's voice ringing out the loudest of them all.

"I wonder if Aunt Joan's ears are burning?" he said at last. "If only she knew Madam Dolly's fate, eh? By-the-bye, is it a very valuable doll, as dolls go? And what if she asks to see it, as she did the last one?"

"Oh, we can say it got broken," Betty suggested. "It won't do to blame the dogs *this* time."

"Oh, you terrible child!" her mother cried.

"Well, after all," exclaimed the Rector, rather warmly, "Joan knows very well that Betty detests dolls, and yet she persists in sending one twice every year; and I don't suppose it cost much."

"Fifteen pence ha'p'ny," remarked Betty promptly. "I saw it on the ticket—fifteen pence ha'p'ny, and not a rag on it. I wish she'd sent fifteen pence ha'p'nyworth of toffee instead;" at which matter-of-fact speech the Rector's shouts of laughter broke out anew.

And after awhile the boy and girl went out, and the simpering waxen-faced doll was, in many ways, put to death.

A DAY—TEN YEARS AFTER.

TEN years had flitted by, and when the morning sun rose on Betty's birthday, it rose in Indian, not in English skies. Betty was Betty Trevor no longer, but Betty Adair, wife of the Squire of Rest, and lieutenant of the 400th Regiment of the Line.

Her people had been not a little unwilling that she should go to India ; but Tom expatiated glowingly on the folly of losing so many years of seniority by exchanging, had moreover given a faithful promise that if he could not effect an exchange into a home regiment of cavalry as soon as he should obtain his company, he would give up the service, and settle down as a country gentleman. He had persuaded Betty also to declare she should really enjoy the short stay of a year or so, and regard it more in the light of a holiday than anything else. So between them, eventually, the Rector and his wife gave way, and the young husband and wife accompanied the regiment, when it sailed Eastward Ho in the good ship *Wellington*.

For about half a year Betty's homeward letters protested that she was really enjoying her new

experiences, and should never regret that part of her life which had been spent in an Indian clime.

Alas, poor Betty! Alas, poor Tom! When the morning of the young wife's nineteenth birthday dawned, matters were going terribly hard with them, as they went that year with many—nay, most of the British residents in the great country which we hold by the power of the sword. In a frail bungalow, sheltered by two weak walls and gates—defences which would have proved no bar to any foe, save cowardly Orientals—besieged by hunger and thirst, by fever and cholera, by battle, murder, and sudden death, these two with others—a mere handful of despairing men and women—kept a terrible and anxious watch in the midst of their enemies, hoping against hope, fighting against fearful odds, desperately putting off the evil day.

Alas, poor Betty! Alas, poor Tom! Up to that morning, the morning of Betty's nineteenth birthday, they had hoped against hope in spite of the overwhelming numbers of their foes; then, all at once, Hope spread her white wings and flew away, leaving them utterly hopeless; indeed, the gallant little garrison had come almost to the end of its strife, the struggle was nearly ended. A well-laid mine had blown up the miserable outer wall and gate of defence, and the worn and weary men and women within could hear the muffled tap-tap-tapping just outside the inner

ones, which told them with too awful distinctness that before many hours had passed they would share the same fate, and the defenders of the garrison would be entirely at the mercy of the besiegers, who outnumbered them by at least a hundred to one.

It was a pitiable scene, a mere handful of Europeans banded together in that awful moment, brothers and sisters by the relationship of common danger and misfortune, without any remembrance of grade or caste. For the most part, the men were consulting how they might die the hardest; all arms were loaded and prepared, ready for the reception of the first rush of Sepoys after the barrier should fall; but the women, poor souls, were huddled together in a heap, paralysed by grief and fear, some with their faces hidden on their arms, others sobbing and crying, some listening to the tapping sound made by the miners, and starting nervously at the slightest unusual noise; and there was one poor, poor soul, lying with a little weakly creature in her arms, a poor little siege-baby two days old, trying feebly to comfort the man who had brought her half-way across the world to meet death in this cruel guise.

"If on'y I hadn't a-brought yer, Nan!" he kept saying over and over again.

"Now don't you take on so, Jim," she murmured, in reply. "If the worst comes it'll soon be overed — *I don't care.*"

"But if on'y I hadn't a-brought yer!" Jim groaned. "If on'y I hadn't, yer'd ha' been safe and sound at home now. Oh, if on'y I'd a-left yer there."

"Nay, now don't you take on so!" she cried, with an ineffable smile on her own worn face; "I'd do the same if I had my time to come over again; and a'ter all, we'll die together when the worst comes."

"I was so proud o' being on the strength o' the regiment," the husband went on distractedly. "I never thought o' harm such as this coming on yer."

"Nay, now don't you take on so, Jim," she repeated wearily, "don't you now."

Tom Adair, who was standing near, turned and strode out into the veranda, a great knot creeping up his throat, and scalding tears in his eyes; but Betty, who had all along been as cool as ice, and as plucky as a tigress, bent down over the sick girl's bed.

"Nan," said she, "you are a brave, brave, generous girl—a real Englishwoman. Some, nay many, would have reproached him for misfortune that he never looked for and could not guard against; but you are too brave and good for that. God keep you, my dear, and may He take us to a better world when our time comes—a world where there will be no oppression, no mutiny, no more partings any more for ever."

Then she bent still lower, and kissed her gently

and the little babe, laid a friendly hand on the husband's bowed head, and followed Tom.

Poor Tom! He was sitting on a smart seat of bamboo-work just outside the door, two revolvers beside him, his hands thrust deep down into his pockets, his eyes fixed miserably on space. Betty sat down beside him, and rested her head on his shoulder, regardless of the men standing about—for those were days when hard hearts grew soft, cold ones warm, when husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, comrades and comrades clung to each other with the agonised clasp of despair.

"Oh, Betty, Betty!" he groaned, "how that poor chap's words have cut me—down to the very bottom of my heart! If only I hadn't brought you out here! Oh, my God! if only I had never brought you out of England!"

"Well, but, dearest, you never looked for this," Betty began.

"There was no need for it: your father begged me to leave the service, and I wouldn't. I would bring you out here," he went on wretchedly, "fool that I was!"

"Don't think about it!" Betty responded promptly. "It will be bad enough when it comes, though I don't know, Tom, whether it need be so bad after all, if they do blow that gate down and carry the barricade; it will be all over for both of us in no time—a couple of shots and we shall know nothing about it. But why think

of it? The gate is not down yet; the wall is thick, for it is brick. The other was only mud. And if they carry that, the barrier may hold out a little while longer, and help may come at any moment."

"It will not hold out an hour. The same explosion will weaken it, and a handful of fire will burn it down in no time," Tom answered, glancing contemptuously at the weak barricade of chairs and tables, ladies' boxes and military chests, which had been laid within the walls. "No; when that gate goes, it will be all up with us. I tell you, Betty, I could *curse* myself."

"Hush, hush, dear! This is not a time for curses," she murmured, with gentle reproach. "Besides, I am like poor Nan Jackson in there — I'd do it over again to-morrow. Bless her!"

For a long time there was silence between them, but at last Betty spoke,—

"Do you know this is my birthday?" she asked suddenly. "I had forgotten it until this moment. Well," smiling, "nobody need wish me many returns of it, anyway."

Tom Adair clasped her a little closer, turning away his agonised face that she might not see it. He had not forgotten. Betty chattered on in her soft, almost childish voice.

"Do you remember the day that you gave me this?" touching the golden cross on her bosom. "Ten years ago. How time flies! It was such a

lovely morning, and you came to breakfast. Do you remember, Tom?"

"Oh, my darling," he broke out, "God knows I never dreamt I was laying such a cross upon you!"

"Never mind, Tom, I can bear it, if need be. Ah, yes, I remember that day so well. What lots of presents I had! Mother gave me this chain—darling mother! I wonder what she is doing at this moment? It is just eight in the morning at home. Very likely they are at prayers—praying for us. And then Daddy will go out for five minutes, and Driver will follow him and chivvy the cat across the lawn. Poor old Driver! he is ten years old now. Uncle Jack gave him to me that same day. I'm glad we didn't bring him."

"Betty, I cannot bear to hear you!" Tom cried, in an agonised voice.

"We may as well talk," said Betty mildly. "We may not have much more time to talk to each other."

If the truth be told, she wanted to die "game," as the saying is, and talked of the past to prevent herself thinking of the present.

"Yes! And Aunt Joan sent me a doll. That was the last time, for, after I was ten, she sent 'useful' presents. Oh, how angry I was!" suddenly breaking into a very real laugh at the recollection of it. "And we promptly went out and put an end to her. We hanged her and we shot

her, and then we guillotined her with old Cookie's big chopper. And then we put her in a bag and floated her for a witch in the horse-trough. And, last of all, we burnt her, poor thing. Do you remember, Tom?"

"Everything," said Tom briefly.

"Poor Aunt Joan! she did not understand children," Betty went on regretfully; "but she meant well *always*, and I daresay she is praying for us all this dreadful time. Poor Aunt Joan! How history repeats itself! We made an end of her doll for fun, and here we are playing the same game in downright good earnest! How oddly things come about!"

"Oh! Betty, Betty!" Tom cried, "don't torture me any more! I am nearly mad when I think of what I have brought upon you."

"But we are together still—we shall be together when the end comes," Betty answered. "Look at this," she added, taking a little silver-clasped Bible from her pocket. "I have written a few words of farewell to—them"—in spite of herself, her voice faltered—"to those at home. I have dated it to-day; and I say, if we are alive to-morrow, I will add something more. They will like to know, and there may be nobody to tell them anything. I thought, as it had a silver clasp, it might be preserved."

"Yes," he said. He could only assent; even to her he could not talk.

At that moment a young man stepped out on

to the veranda—a young officer, who had only been four months in India.

“Mr Gore is going to give us the sacrament,” he said. “Will you come?”

Betty rose immediately.

“Yes, we will come. We may not have the opportunity of taking it on earth again,” she said; then followed him into the room, and took her place beside Nan Jackson’s bed.

Always is the celebration of the Lord’s Supper one of the most solemn services of our Church. On that day it was something more than solemn—it was awesome. The worn and haggard chaplain stood in the midst of that worn and haggard congregation, and began the charge, “Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins . . . draw near with faith, and take this Holy Sacrament to your comfort, and make your humble confession to Almighty God, meekly kneeling upon your knees.”

They were not all of one creed, the men and women who made that little band; yet, now that the gates of death were within their view, now that they were even fast opening to receive them, all differences of faith had fallen away, all were gathered together in one mind to seek the aid of Him who once trod the same thorny path now pressed by their worn and weary feet; who once drank to the very dregs the bitter cup set before each one of them in that terrible hour of suspense and trial.

There were Protestants and Presbyterians, Roman Catholics and followers of Wesley, and there were some who had never troubled themselves to be anything. All these now were gathered together as sheep under one shepherd, whether He would choose to lead them into a green pasture and beside the waters of comfort, or take them at once into the kingdom of heaven, wearing each a glorious crown, to shine for ever among the noble army of martyrs.

The last words of a solemn rite died away, and a death-like silence fell upon the little band of people, broken at length by the wailing cry of the tiny babe; then there was the sound of a crash without, the f-ph-ph-ff—bang! of exploding gunpowder, the cracking and tearing sound of breaking and yielding timbers, and a shout of triumphant joy from the besieging Sepoys.

The gate was down!

There was a wild rush of men to the doors, and one woman, Betty Adair.

“Don’t leave me, Tom!” she cried. “Let me be close to you when the barricade falls, and then—send the bullet as near my heart as you can.”

Even then the frail barricade shook visibly, and almost immediately a black face appeared above the summit. There was the sound of a shot, a piercing cry, and he fell back—*dead!* Then there seemed to be another rush; the barrier shook again—again—more—

"It's all over now," said Betty Adair, with intense calmness. "Kiss me once, Tom, and then—end it."

Tom kissed her, not once, but a dozen times, and put the revolver to her breast. Betty looked with a smile straight into his white and haggard face.

"Be quick!" she said. "They are just over."

Tom's hand fell.

"It's no use, Betty, I can't do it. God help me! I cannot murder you."

"Give it to me," she answered; "I—can."

For a moment he held his hand to prevent her taking it; then, as the wild yells of the enemy broke on the sultry air, and he realised what would be her fate, left to those wretches, he allowed her to take the weapon from him, and, turning his face to the wall, hid his eyes, that he might not see her die.

But—hark! What was that? Betty lowered the pistol just as she was about to fire; another moment, and she would have pulled the trigger. It was all done in an instant. Not ten minutes had passed since Mr Gore had spoken the last words of the benediction, and but a moment before she had been without hope. After listening but a few seconds, she thrust the revolver back into his hand.

"Fight it out, Tom. We are saved!" she cried. "Listen! Don't you hear it?"

"Hip—hip, hur—ray! Hur—ray!"

Every head was raised ; hope shone in every eye. Strong men trembled who had been calm ; trembling, terror-stricken women became still. The shout was very faint, and now and then the fierce yells of the Sepoys utterly drowned it. Then it rose on the air again, louder and nearer, “ Hur—ray ! Hur—ray ! ”

It put new life into that worn and well-nigh despairing garrison. They did fight, desperately. The cheers came nearer and nearer. Then there was a rush of kilted Highlanders, a conflict of a few seconds, and the mass of black faces surged, hesitated, broke up, and retreated, as a wave of the sea breaks against the rocks which have stood unconquered during thousands of years. And then, in the midst of the hand-shakings and blessings that went on on all sides—would you believe it ?—Betty suddenly gave way, and burst into weak hysterical tears.

Never mind, Betty ! There was many a man, bigger and stronger but not braver than you, who choked down the tears he would have scorned to shed while grim death stared him in the face. The old colonel, patting her shoulder, said to a group of the new-comers,—

“ There, there ! Mrs Adair and the owner of the poor little siege-baby in there are the two bravest women in the world. God bless ’em both ! ”





MISS HARKER'S REPUTATION.

EPISODE I.

IT was just ten years ago. Poor Carry was little more than a bride—we were all-in-all to each other, full-filled with love and tenderness.

At that time we had a charmingly idyllic cottage, not actually a cottage—unless we say a *cottage ornée*; but, perhaps, as there was extensive stabling, to say nothing of glass-houses and vineries, it would be more correct to describe it as “a bijou residence.”

It was situated about a mile and a half from the city of Blankhampton, and I must admit that under its roof I spent the three happiest years of my life. For Carry was all that was sweet, submissive, accomplished, and good; not handsome, though a fine woman. But there—handsome is that handsome does; and Carry from the day of our marriage certainly did very handsomely in

the character of Mrs James Enoch Tankerville, my wife.

She was my second—they say second thoughts are best—and Carry certainly was, for she never said “no” to anything *I* said, and never (though a splendidly-built woman, and a woman, moreover, of spirit) for a moment forgot the injunction, “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands.” Of course, had she ever shown the smallest disposition to disregard it, I should promptly have nipped the intention in the bud; for, though I am the sweetest and most even-tempered of men, I must above all things be the master of my own house, and most truly do I believe in the rule which says, “The husband is the head of the wife.”

But Carry was always a pattern of sweet humility. Unlike Rosa, my first wife, she never questioned my authority, for *my* word was law; she never rebelled against my decisions; she never murmured against my judgments. Truly, the heart of her husband did safely repose in her—her price was far above rubies.

I was very proud of her. As I have said, she was a very fine-looking woman, well-proportioned as a Venus, and highly accomplished. I was very proud of her—proud when I drove her through the narrow streets of Blankhampton—proud when I handed her up the aisle of the church we attended—proud when she hung on my arm at regatta or flower-show—well, no, not

exactly hung, for Carry much disliked walking arm-in-arm, though she always did it to please me.

Well, we had been married about three months when we gave a dinner party. It was at this dinner-party that the first episode of my story took place.

It was an anxious affair. First of all we determined whom we should ask ; then we had to decide whom we *could* ask, as nearly all those whom we had asked had prior engagements. However, the second batch of invitations proved more successful, and our number was made up. Apropos of that, I chanced—quite by accident—to hear my mother-in-law drop a remark about “highways and byways,” which, like Captain Cuttle, I made a note of.

It was a very anxious affair !

Old Millefleurs, the French *chef* at the Club, came to cook the dinner, and grumbled and growled at every culinary utensil my kitchen contained, until at last I threatened to kick him out of it ; whereupon the melodramatic old fool tucked up his sleeves and wanted to fight, contemptuously making a parade of shaking the dust of Briarwood from off his feet when I declined that honour, declaring that I might have the pleasure of cooking my dinner myself.

Now, when I had with some difficulty got together just the wrong set of people to meet Colonel le Mesurier—the commanding officer of the distinguished regiment of Volunteers of which

I was then but a subaltern—I simply could not afford to have any tricks played to the detriment of the dinner itself. I therefore was compelled to put my pride in my pocket and use my best endeavours to smoothe the old fool down the right way, and so get him to resume his white linen crown and ladle-sceptre. But to no purpose. The old idiot made me as grand a bow as the rotundity of his person would allow, and said, “Monsieur, je suis Chevalier de France—vous êtes canaille,” and then he added—“*Sans culotte.*”

It was from Carry that I afterwards learnt the precise nature of his insults, or I should assuredly not have pocketed the affront, even in the dire necessity in which I was placed. As it was, I looked round at her and told her to try and bring him to his senses—which she did. I can’t imagine how, since *I* had tried and failed. But she had always been a favourite of his, and I heard them jabbering together for an hour afterwards, so, as he ended by cooking the dinner, I conclude she made it all right with him.

Long after, when I had lost my poor Carry, my mother-in-law made a statement to the effect that old Millefleurs had sent my groom down to her house with a request for the loan of various culinary articles—the pick of her kitchen, she said—and demanded, with but scant courtesy, that they should be returned. I replied, with my usual urbane courtesy and suavity, that she must be mistaken, as I had never heard of any such loan

and I was perfectly certain that my poor Carry, now singing among the angels, would not have presumed to take the responsibility of using my name upon herself, and I could not insult her precious memory by admitting the circumstance ever to have taken place.

However, old Millefleurs cooked the dinner—cooked it uncommonly well, too—far better than any of the people who ate it deserved. I must say I never regretted giving that dinner party but once, and that was always. It cost a lot of money ; it caused me a great deal of anxiety and trouble ; it made me suffer considerable humiliation in eating humble pie to that old ass Millefleurs—a process I did not like, and which availed me nothing ; and, moreover, it made me run a great risk of losing much of my influence over Carry, by showing her that she had power to succeed where I had failed. And, worst of all, that dinner cost me—but there, I must not anticipate my story.

It was a first-rate dinner—no doubt at all about it. I remember we had the first lamb and green peas of the season. The joint was a loin—I am particularly partial to loin of lamb, but that loin cost me dear in more ways than one. It cost me the best parlour-maid that ever waited at a table : I never was able to replace her.

And it happened in this wise. Underlying a loin of lamb, embedded in sweet and delicious fat, there is a kidney, a tender and succulent morsel

which, when I am carving that joint, I always reserve for myself. In my opinion, the carver has a distinct right to any tit-bit which may pertain to a joint, more especially if he may happen to have paid for it.

I made a point of giving some fat to a lady on my right hand, and of distributing the same favour equally all round the table ; but when it came to my turn to help myself, the kidney was *non est*. I felt about with my knife among the juicy fat--no, there was no kidney. I looked round for Sarah.

"Sarah," I said, in an undertone, "the kidney has been taken out of this loin."

"Don't know, I'm sure, sir," she responded, very pertly, and in a perfectly audible voice.

"But I tell you it has—go and inquire about it."

I was annoyed and spoke warmly, though in a whisper.

Sarah instantly took up the mint-sauce and proceeded to hand it down the table with an air of the utmost defiance. How I should like to have shaken her ! Of course, I could see in her guilty and defiant face where my kidney was, the shameless hussy !

I waited until dinner was over—until the gentlemen had gone to join the ladies in the drawing-room—and then, just as I was putting away the decanters—for I never think it right to leave temptation in the way of my servants—in she bounced.

"Please, sir, I'll leave this day month," she said

sharply. "I have not been used to been called* afore company, and I'll not put up with it," and then out she bounced again before I could get a word in edgeways, the ill-tempered wretch.

I was so enraged that I dared not trust myself to join my guests until I had cooled my head by a waft of the night air. I therefore went out by the front door, with the intention of entering the drawing-room by means of the conservatory, which opened into the larger of the greenhouses. In both of these we had laid down matting, and in the conservatory hung Chinese lanterns, so that it was all in a "dim religious light," while the greenhouse was almost in darkness. Absorbed in my own disturbed thoughts, I made my way through the darkness till, at the door of the conservatory, my footsteps were arrested by the sound of a voice, which said, "His first wife, you know, is married to some high official of the Shah or the Sultan, or some Eastern potentate or other."

"You don't say so?"

"Oh, but I do though. I wouldn't have come here to-night but for poor Carry's sake. Poor thing, she was simply infatuated by all his plausible promises, and was tired, I suppose, of waiting for anybody else to turn up. She must have found out her mistake by now; and, after all, you know, it was nothing of a match for her, in spite of his groom and his glass-houses. Jack tells me he gets this place at a very low rent—it's

* "Called" is a North-country equivalent for "scolded."

damp or something—and really everything nice about the place has come from her mother's."

"Is that so?"

"Oh, dear, yes. I've dined off that service at Mrs Conway's many a time; and I saw that all the table-ornaments and most of the silver was hers. And what a rage he was in over the lamb!"

"Ah, yes; what was that?" the other asked interestedly. "I saw there was something."

Mrs Robinson—a self-assertive, uppish parson's wife, whom I had taken in to dinner—laughed as she replied,—

"Oh, didn't you see? It was such a joke. He made a great display of giving me some fat when he helped me to lamb, and by mistake he gave me the kidney, which he had evidently meant for himself. I saw him looking about for it, so kept it well hidden under my knife and fork, and he, of course, thought it had been 'cribbed' in the kitchen, and blew the servant up about it there and then. She looked furious; I expect she'll be giving notice in the morning."

"What a shame! Poor Mrs Tankerville will have to suffer for that. Why didn't you tell him you had got it?"

"Oh, I couldn't do that. It would have created rather a sensation, if I had said sweetly, 'I see, Mr Tankerville, that you are looking for the kidney. You gave it, by mistake, to me.'"

Yes—and it would have created rather more of a sensation if I had just stepped in upon the two

sneering, giggling women, and confronted them, instead of doing as I did, retracing my steps and entering the drawing-room by the hall. I did not, however, want to make a sensation just then—I preferred to wait.

Well, during the course of the evening the conversation chanced to turn upon the married state, and particularly upon re-marrying. I took occasion to say that I was so perfectly happy that if I ever had the misfortune to lose my Carry, I should never attempt to replace her.

“Oh,” I said, “if I were to put another wife into her place, I should expect to see her spirit always beside me.”

“And very unpleasant it would be,” the Colonel remarked. “Very awkward, too—very awkward thing for a man to have two wives at a time, very awkward—not to say embarrassing.”

I believe he was entirely innocent of giving utterance to a *double entendre*; but I heard a suppressed laugh behind me, and made haste to reply, so as to cover it.

“There is nothing like betting on a subject, Colonel,” I cried, with warmth, “particularly a subject under discussion. Now I don’t mind betting anyone a thousand pounds that, in the event of my wife’s death, I never marry again.”

“Oh, we may all die before you,” said the Colonel. “Besides, nobody would like to press such a debt, you know. But you might make a bond, signed and witnessed, payable to the holder,

that if your wife die before you, and you desire to marry again—or rather, if you do marry again—you will forfeit the sum of a thousand pounds.”

“Done!” I cried.

“That’s good—I like to keep a man to his word. Can you give us a sheet of paper, Mrs Tankerville?”

Poor Carry looked frightened to death as she rose from her chair, and her hand shook as she gave him the paper as if she had brought it for her own death-warrant. Eventually, this was the bond that was drawn up, signed and witnessed:—

“I—James Enoch Tankerville, of Briarwood, near Blankhampton, Lieutenant of the First South West Royal Chalkshire Rifle Volunteers—do hereby pledge myself, in the double event of my wife, Caroline Tankerville, formerly Conway, predeceasing me, and of my marrying again, to pay to the holder of this bond the sum of one thousand pounds sterling.

JAMES ENOCH TANKERVILLE.

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|------------|
| Robert Le Mesurier, | } | Witnesses. |
| Frank Wilson, | | |
| Charles Robinson | | |
| (Clerk in Holy Orders), | | |

Briarwood, near Blankhampton,

March 28th, 187—”

“Carry,” I said, two hours later, “where is that bond affair?”

"I don't know, James," she answered in a trembling voice; "someone has taken it away—" then seeing me frown, she cried, piteously, "You don't want to marry again, do you?"

"Oh, no, no, of course not," I asserted, "only it seems an absurd thing—to keep."

EPISODE II.

IT was seven years after this that my poor dear Carry was taken from my side to become an angel of light.

I mourned her deeply. I wore the widest of hatbands, and she was buried in three coffins—I felt as she was laid in the vault belonging to the Conway family, that I could afford to lap her in shell and lead and brass-bound oak.

We had no children, and I therefore found myself in a position of great loneliness—a position which my relatives made many and not perhaps wholly disinterested endeavours to improve. For one of my brothers had a family of fourteen, and would only too gladly have carted three or four of them over to me, and burdened me with their maintenance for ever. Then, too, there were nieces and nephews of poor Carry's, equally anxious to relieve my loneliness, equally impetuous, and a very great deal more lively and more devoted to me.

I was rather at a loss to decide upon which side of the house I should bestow my favours; and then, while I was considering the matter, my

plans were all altered—for I became possessed of the idea that poor Carry's place might be filled, and that I might marry a wife, young and well-favoured, a wife with good worldly—that is monetary—prospects. I had very much trouble with my servants. The cook drank, and was jealous of the housemaid—so she left.

A new cook came, and she complained that she could not provide the kitchen dinners out of the allowance which my late dear wife had always found ample to provide every delicacy of the season—for I work hard, very hard, and I always *will* have my dinner.

Well, as we could not agree about the allowance, this cook also left, and in her stead I determined to choose one with great care. I accordingly advertised in these words :—

“Wanted immediately, for a gentleman's house, a good cook, who must thoroughly understand her duties, soups, jellies, etc. The family consists of one gentleman, and she must be a careful manager and a trustworthy person in every respect. Preference will be given to a total abstainer. Apply on Friday or Saturday, between the hours of nine and eleven in the morning, and six and eight in the evening, to Captain Tankerville, Chesnut Lodge, Parade Street, Blankhampton.”

That procured me the right article—no mistake about it. Cook? She *was* a cook, a gorgeous cook, worthy of the *ordon bleu*.

But, *hélas!* we never seem to stand still in this world—we are always climbing and struggling up, and for ever slipping and sliding down. For a week or two I had the life of a perfect paradise. I fairly revelled in good cooking, and I asked every fellow I wanted to oblige, to dine in a quiet way. My little housemaid, who was an exceedingly pretty girl of great taste, proved herself quite an adept in arranging flowers in all the vases and in laying out the dinner-table to the best advantage. But, *hélas!* it did not last; after three weeks the cook gave notice—she couldn't stop, not no longer, she told me.

I asked — why? She sniffed indignantly, and said she hadn't been accustomed to be under the 'ousemaid, and that the 'ousemaid gave herself *hairs*, so she would put up with her imperence no longer. For her part, she added, she believed that she was a saucy hussy, who was no better nor she should be.

I asked her indignantly what she meant—when she told me significantly that I knew as much, if not more, about “Hann” than she did. I instantly ordered her out of the room, telling her she was a jealous, evil-minded, wicked woman, and if she didn't be careful she would get herself into trouble.

And that night she got so awfully drunk! I had to bundle her out there and then, and I believe I swore at “Hann” for being the cause of her defalcations.

After that I had a succession of cooks. But they one and all fell foul of the 'ousemaid, of "Hann." In vain I changed her designation from "Hann" to Miss Harker, and made her the house-keeper instead of the housemaid. I really think the domestics who came after that hated "Miss 'Arker worse than the others hated "Hann." It was in vain that I gave her a small sitting-room to herself and ordered her meals to be served there—it was in vain. New cooks and new housemaids alike got along for a bit and then contrived somehow to get across with "Miss 'Arker," and invariably ended the rows which followed by withering remarks of scathing self-abuse for having demeaned themselves to take orders from and for having waited upon a 'ousemaid no better nor she should be.

Surely, it cannot be wondered at that I turned my thoughts upon the better plan of putting a mistress at the head of my establishment, a mistress who would be something more than a house-keeper, and of higher origin than a housemaid.

I fixed upon Miss Talbot (Loo) as the one whom I should endeavour to propitiate with a view to becoming a suitor for her hand. I must say that girl gave me every encouragement, every encouragement to declare my intentions and to continue my attentions—I did hear, by a side wind, every encouragement to make a fool of myself: but I set that clause down to envy, pure and simple.

But I have told elsewhere* the story of Loo's falseness and duplicity—in truth, she proved as utterly worthless and false a little jade as ever man wasted thought over; and I only mention her because at the time when I had every reason to believe I should, when my term (a year, that is) of mourning for poor dear Carry had expired, re-enter the holy state of matrimony and bid a graceful adieu to the cares and worries of household management, there suddenly reverted to my mind the recollection of a foolish bond—made in joke at a certain dinner-party, long, long ago, when old Millefleurs had threatened to baste my head with his own ladle—a bond which provided that, in the event of my marrying again, I should pay to the holder thereof the sum of a thousand pounds. That bond mysteriously disappeared—it was never afterwards found—and in my mind there lingered some few doubts as to what might have become of it.

What if my late mother-in-law should have it in her possession? Why, simply this—she would enforce her right to the uttermost farthing; and her right, if she chanced to hold the bond, would be just the value of a thousand pounds.

However, as all idea of marrying Loo died away, the memory of that precious bond did not continue to trouble me; and time went on, went on indeed for two years or more, and Miss Harker still remained at the head of my establishment.

* See "Regimental Legends," by J. S. Winter.

Unfortunately, domestic rows went on too, and went on moreover to such an extent that at length, after an even worse *fracas* than usual, I suddenly made up my mind that I would take a third, and at once.

I had several reasons for arriving at this determination, one of which was that my old flame, Loo Talbot, had once more burst upon the little world of Blankhampton as an engaged young lady. She had a way of getting engaged, but this time I really thought she meant it; for the man, a coarse, square-shouldered, big-limbed fellow (Loo always did admire that gross type), seemed to be always hanging about the town, and might be seen dangling after the girl morning, noon, and night. I felt it would be a good thing to let that young woman see I had been able to console myself elsewhere; and I didn't somehow altogether relish the way the fellow looked to me, when they passed me in the street; so I felt it would be a good thing if I were married and settled before them—it would serve to take him down better than anything.

And that was not the only reason I had for determining to enter into matrimony for the third time; there were others more cogent, not to say urgent. In fact, my domestics had one and all united in one particular line of conduct, and had invariably used the same form of reproach—and it was surely very strange that whether as

"Hann" the 'ousemaid, or as "Miss 'Arker" the 'ousekeeper, every one of the long string of servants who shared with her the responsibility of attending to my comfort and of keeping up my establishment, had invariably raised the same cry, a cry which proclaimed that "Hann 'Arker" was no better than she should be.

I suppose the truth was they were all jealous of her pretty face, and of the influence that face had over me—I always was a susceptible dog where a pretty face was concerned. I was always keenly alive, too, to the smallest slight upon a woman's reputation, and so—to cut a long story short—in order to save "Hann 'Arker's" reputation, I married her.

Of course I will not pretend for a moment that it was anything less than an enormous sacrifice on my part to have done it—yet, I don't know. Society and I had been on the footing of an armed neutrality for a long time past. I had long before found out the hollowness of it all; the uselessness of giving dances to people I didn't even know by sight, and who mistook me for one of my own waiters, besides never taking the least notice of me afterwards; of giving dinners to people who never asked one back again, and seemed to think that they had more than repaid me by condescending to come. And—lately, I admit—I have come to see the unutterable folly of wishing to marry a girl like Loo Talbot, who thinks no more of giving a shilling for a peach

(for herself, too) than she would of giving tenpence a pound for salmon. So, one fine morning, "Hann" and I went quietly to church and got married, and then went quietly off to the seaside for a week's honeymoon.

I felt that I had done an uncommonly wise thing. She was, of course, considerably elated, and not a little overwhelmed by the dignity of her new position. And she altered all poor dear Carry's clothes to fit herself, without the least idea of turning up her nose at them, as Loo Talbot had openly done. Matters about the house, too, went much more smoothly, and I realised before I had been married a month that the new Mrs Tankerville was in reality an excellent manager. So careful of my interests, too. I know I might have what is vulgarly called whistled a long time before Loo would have made a pound of Gorgonzola cheese last as long as "Hann" did. The secret of that little bit of management was that she never allowed anyone to touch it but me. Imagine Loo being capable of such devotion! Why, it simply isn't in the girl; she couldn't do it.

And then one fine morning a thunderbolt fell upon me. For one of poor Carry's brothers—a coarse sort of fellow, such as Loo admires—stalked into my office and presented me with a thunderbolt, or, in plain language, with a claim for the modest sum of a thousand pounds!

I tried to laugh it off. I declared that it was

manifestly absurd to press a claim for a promise made in joke.

"Made in joke or not, Tankerville," my late brother-in-law answered, "you've got to pay that money. The bond was made in your presence and at your wish; it was signed by you and witnessed by three men of honour, of position, and of thorough disinterestedness *now living*, and it holds good in the eyes of the law. Therefore you will pay the money, or—" with a threatening flourish of his brawny arm which made me fairly shiver, for I am not a large man—"it will be the worse for you."

I felt—and a horrible cold perspiration which had broken out upon my forehead did a good deal to help me to the feeling—that the supreme moment which I had been dreading for years had come at last, and that I must face it with the best grace I could. It would be a wrench, an awful wrench, parting with the money; but yet, how was I to get out of it? I couldn't disprove that I had married "Hann 'Arker"—the greatest of fools that I was to do it.

Of course I did not give in without a struggle—what man would? I swaggered a good deal about the whole affair being a gross swindle. I blustered my best. I told him that he had indeed raised a storm in me; that I was so indignant I could scarcely discuss the matter calmly and quietly.

My late brother-in-law remarked he did not want

me to discuss the matter at all, he wanted the money; and added, edging a trifle nearer to the door in a way which made my flesh creep, that he intended to have it.

I then tried other means. I dwelt at length upon the husband I had been to Carry, and said I did think I was really deserving of better treatment, and of greater consideration from her family than they had ever shown me. I spoke mournfully and touchingly of her happiness, of her pleasures, her birds, her flowers, of all the sweet domestic joys of her life; but I made no impression—unless, indeed, it was a bad one—upon John Conway.

“Now, look here, James Tankerville,” he said—he had firmly planted his back against the door by that time and turned the key in the lock as he spoke, slipping it into his pocket—“look here, it’s no earthly use your whining and snivelling or swaggering and blustering about Carry or anything else. Carry was simply a million times too good for you, and you treated her from first to last like the cowardly brute you are. Do you think your snivelling now can alter the fact that the girl led the life of a dog, after she became your wife? However, that’s all past and gone now; she chose to marry you against all our advice and wishes, and, poor girl, she paid for it dearly. But still, that’s all past and gone now, and if you had chosen to put a lady into her place instead of her housemaid, or *anybody* with

a better character than Ann Harker, my mother would have torn that precious bombastic bond up and have scorned to claim the money. But as it is—as you have chosen to insult my dead sister's memory by giving her such a successor, as you have chosen to trick that creature out in my dead sister's clothes and jewels, both of which were given to her by her mother and *not* out of your pocket—why, you will have to pay the money, that is all.”

I began to think that Loo's mortification and “Hann's” reputation were going to cost me more than I had ever bargained for. And I might have known that the old cat had that bond in safe keeping!

“I haven't so much money in the bank,” I urged at length.

“That's a lie,” returned John Conway coolly. “You sold £1100 worth of Midland shares last week, and you paid the money into the bank yesterday afternoon.”

“One of the bank fellows told you that!” I exclaimed furiously. “I shall report the fact immediately.”

“You needn't,” returned John Conway, with a coolness particularly exasperating to me in my disturbed condition of mind. “I saw you pay the money in myself. You were so taken up with the importance of handling a big sum that you couldn't help bragging about it, so that all the world might hear you. Now just sit down there,

James Tankerville, and write me a cheque for a thousand pounds."

"I shall certainly not do that."

"Then I'll punch your head to a jelly," he answered promptly, and with a significant gesture of his arm. I had to sit down and do it; for I knew well enough—too well, in fact—that John Conway would keep his word.

I made it out to "self"—and, in truth, I had never loathed the word self so thoroughly in all my life before as I did at that moment.

"Now, back it," was his next order.

I backed it—"James E. Tankerville"—though my shaking fingers could scarcely guide the pen.

John Conway unlocked the door and rang the bell.

"Send your head-clerk for the money, and let it be in ten-pound Bank of England notes," he said.

I had to do it. My clerk looked surprised when he saw the amount of the cheque, but I passed it off as airily as I could.

"You may as well give me the bond," I answered to John Conway, as the door closed behind the clerk.

"When I have got the money," answered John Conway grimly.

"Do you think I want to do you out of your ill-gotten gains?" I demanded hotly.

"I don't know what you *want*, James Tankerville," he replied, "but I'm very sure you *won't*."

It *was* hard to receive a big sum like that—a hundred crisp, new, crackling Bank of England notes, each worth ten pounds—and then have to hand them over into John Conway's merciless grasp.

He put them carefully away in his breast-pocket—almost as carefully as I should have done—and buttoned his coat over them. Then he laid the bond on the table, stood up very straight and looked round the room.

"Well, I shall probably never come into this room again," he said. "So, good-bye, James—no, I'd rather not shake hands, thank you."

I had not the very smallest intention of shaking hands *with* him; but as the door closed behind his burly form, I shook both my fists *at* him, first one and then the other. Then I flung the bond upon the fire and shook my fist at the door again, and I said—well—as Sterne beautifully puts it—"the accusing angel blushed as he gave it in, and the recording angel, as he wrote it down, dropped a tear upon the word and blotted it out for ever."

I have written this account because I have reason to believe that, as considerably more than seven years had passed between the day on which I foolishly signed that bond and that on which John Conway claimed the money—and got it—it was, as I never renewed it, then null and void.

I don't like to tell any of my acquaintances in Blankhampton how I have been duped; nor yet do I like to go to a lawyer and put the case to him as that of a friend—the "friend" always means oneself.

But if anyone who reads this story will come forward and advise me how to get the money back again, he will not find me lacking in liberality—I would stand a tenner with pleasure.

NOTE.—We wish it to be distinctly understood that we are not responsible for J. E. T.'s grammar or diction.—ED.





WOODED IN JEST AND WEDDED IN EARNEST.



HERE were a good many eligible men in the old city of Idleminster, but Merlin Rudersheim stood at the head of the list.

He was a doctor, in good—nay, first-rate—practice; he wrote himself “M.D., F.R.C.S.”; was tall and fairly good-looking, even if a trifle heavy and often rather absent-minded; was about five-and-thirty years old, and a pronounced old bachelor.

It was absolutely wonderful how many considerate ladies had arranged pleasant little dinners or cosy little suppers for Dr Merlin Rudersheim’s benefit. It was amusing to see how many young ladies possessed of comfortable *dots* had been made bosom friends of by his sisters; and it was even more remarkable

what a number of gay, careless young fellows, not having an idea in common with the grave, scholarly man of medicine, were wont to slip friendly hands under his arm and press him to "come in, old fellow, for an hour to-night, and have a little music or a chat with the governor."

Unfortunately these delicate little plans failed to bring about the desired end. After ten years spent in working an Idleminster practice, Dr Rudersheim was wifeless still, and likely to remain so. Most people, indeed, had given him up as a hopeless case, and had turned their considerate attentions in other directions.

But, having gone scathless through ten years of gradually-waning fire, he was doomed to undergo yet another attack, and this time the belligerent was neither a lady with marriageable daughters, nor a friend of the Misses Rudersheim, nor a young man possessed of sisters to whom he wished to afford an opportunity of settling comfortably in life. No; it was just a young lady herself—a gay, bright little coquette, twenty years old, with a firm belief in Thackeray's theory that, given a fair field and no favour, any woman can conquer any man upon whom she chooses to set her affections.

"It's all bosh, Kitty!" laughed Jack, her brother, to whom one day she was airing her views. "There's Merlin Rudersheim; if you

can manage to make that old wiseacre spooney, I'll give in,—tip you a fiver into the bargain."

"Done!" laughed the girl brightly. "I do just know him a little—that is, he takes his hat off to me—shuffles it off, I should say—whenever he sees me, only, worse luck, he doesn't always happen to see me. But, Jack, dear, what's to be the test?—not matrimony, I hope; I couldn't go so far as that!"

"Oh, you didn't marry Carter, or Fane, or that swaggering donkey Lumley, yet we all knew how far matters had gone. No, no! I'll be fair and straightforward about it, and when Rudersheim's intimacy suddenly ceases I'll tip up the fiver; only mind, I don't believe in your bringing about any intimacy at all."

"We'll see," returned Kitty Conniston teasingly.

However, a week went over without any appearance of success. True she had met Merlin Rudersheim once, but his grey, thoughtful eyes had gazed straight over her head into vacancy, so that her half-pleading, half-coquettish glance had been utterly thrown away upon him. Buried in thought, he had not even seen her.

But Kitty was not to be daunted thus easily. She knew, none better, the effect to be produced by the possessor of dark, soft eyes upon even the stiffest of stiff old bachelors.

"Never mind," she cried, in answer to Jack's good-humoured chaff. "Rome was not built in

a day, you know, and let us hope for better luck next time."

"Kitty, my dear," said Mrs Conniston, entering at that moment, "here is a letter from the girls at Knapwith, to say they are coming in to tea this afternoon, and Mabel Downe is coming with them."

"How nice!" cried Kitty heartily.

"But, dear, I sent over to Foster's for cakes and so on, and their lemon cheese-cakes are all gone, and the girls from Knapwith do always enjoy them so, I like to have some. I wish you would go across the Precincts to Hellyer's and order a dozen."

"Better make it two," put in Jack. "I can eat a lot."

"Say eighteen, then, dear. You see Mary is laying the cloth, and cook, of course, is very busy."

"I'll bring them back with me," said Kitty.

"Well, if you—" her mother began.

"Don't mind," finished Kitty, with a laugh. "Why, dear little mother, everyone in Idleminster knows me. I'm not afraid of losing caste, like Mrs Wainwright, who's so awfully grand and refined that she can't carry two pennyworth of pears half the length of a street. I'll bring them, only give me some money."

Mrs Conniston gave her purse to Kitty, who forthwith ran upstairs for her hat and sealskin coat.

"And if I see Merlin," she laughed, putting her head in at the door on her way out, "I shall bring him back with me."

"Will you?" Jack laughed back.

"Won't I?" she retorted.

Then, womanlike, having got the last word, she shut the door and departed.

The Connistons lived in a street known as St Olives, and Hellyer's, the French pastrycook's shop, was in Queen Street, on the other side of the Cathedral Close. Kitty looked about on the way there, but not a sign was there to be seen of Dr Merlin Rudersheim.

"How Jack will crow over me," she thought, with a mental groan, as she opened the door.

"A dozen and a half lemon cheese-cakes?" said Mrs Hellyer. "You'd better let me send them, Miss Conniston; they'll be a large parcel."

"Oh no, thanks, Mrs Hellyer, I'll take them," Kitty answered. "We are rather in a hurry for them. Are they quite fresh?"

"Just warm out of the oven," was the reply.

So Kitty, holding the bag firmly by the double band of paper at the bottom, so as not to crush the cheesecakes, turned homewards, thinking not at all of them but of Dr Merlin Rudersheim, and how her plot was to be carried out.

"Oh! here he comes," she said to herself, with a great start, as she turned out of Queen Street into the Minster Precincts; "and Mr Loveday. I've a good mind to stop."

Mr Loveday was one of the vicars-choral, and possessed the keenest wit and the heartiest laugh of any man in Idlemminster. Kitty knew him very well, so there would be nothing unusual in her stopping to speak to him. The only thing was, would Merlin Rudersheim simply take off his hat and walk on?

Stop, however, Kitty undoubtedly did, though scarcely in the way she had intended, for just as the two gentlemen were moving their sticks from their right hands to their left, ready to take off their hats to her, and just as Kitty was putting on her most bewitching smile, her ankle twisted—it might be that she trod on a piece of orange peel—turned under her, down she went, what she afterwards described as a “regular smash,” and out shot the cheese-cakes—eighteen of them—all over the road.

“Dear me!” Mr Loveday ejaculated, “but we have got into the land of Goshen!”

As for Kitty, she simply sat on the ground and laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks, and even solemn Merlin unbent and joined in her mirth, laughing perhaps more heartily than ever he had laughed in all his five-and-thirty years of life.

“Hadn’t you better get up?” he said at last, holding out his hands to assist her to rise.

“I can’t,” Kitty gasped, sinking back, and turning very white. “I think I’ve twisted my ankle.”

In one moment the faint remnants of laughter vanished from Dr Rudersheim's face, and he was transformed into the grave man of medicine.

"Miss Conniston has sprained her ankle," he explained to Mr Loveday, who had occupied himself in gathering up the luckless cheese-cakes, with an assurance that they would not be any the worse, at which Kitty burst out laughing again, even though the pain she was suffering caused the tears to stand in her eyes.

"I'd no idea you were hurt, you laughed so," Mr Loveday said, looking down upon her. "What's to be done, Rudersheim? Get her into one of these houses?"

"No, there's a cab," Merlin answered, holding up his hand. "The sooner she is at home the better. I'll take her myself and attend to the ankle at once. Now, Miss Conniston, let me lift you in."

"Don't hurt me!" Kitty cried, shrinking back, her big dark eyes looking bigger and darker than ever against the pallor of her face.

"Trust yourself entirely to me, and you shall feel the move as little as possible," he told her gently.

So Kitty permitted him to lift her from the ground, and bit her lips till the blood came in the effort to repress a scream which under any other circumstances she must have uttered.

"Brave child!" said Merlin Rudersheim approvingly, arranging the cushions for her best

comfort. "Loveday, will you tell the man to drive softly over the stones?"

Yet in spite of his care and the short distance they had to go, it was a horrid journey. The poor slender ankle was badly sprained, and great tears streamed down Kitty's cheeks, which somehow disturbed Merlin Rudersheim so much that once or twice he made as if he would have wiped them away. Such a brave little girl she was too—he knew she was suffering horribly, yet only the silent tears betrayed her, and thoroughly glad was he when the cab pulled up at the door of No. 6 St Olives.

Jack ran out, thinking his cousins had arrived, and being greeted by Dr Rudersheim's grave face, burst out laughing, thinking it was all a ruse of clever Kitty.

"Your sister has sprained her ankle—*badly*," Merlin said severely, wondering what on earth the lad could find amusing in the affair. "Go in and get some brandy. I will lift her out."

"Don't let Jack touch me," said Kitty, with a half-sob.

"No one shall touch you but myself," he answered. Yet for all his care and strength, it was a horrid wrench to the ankle when he lifted her out of the cab and carried her to the nearest sofa.

Jack, shaking with laughter, watched the whole proceeding with admiring eyes, thinking what a clever little witch she was; what a cunning little

actress, so completely to gull a big-wig like solemn Rudersheim; when Kitty suddenly undeceived him by fainting dead away.

"Why, she really is hurt!" Jack cried out, in his surprise.

"Hurt!" Merlin echoed. "You don't suppose I should have brought her home in a cab if she hadn't been, do you?"

"No, of course not," unable to repress a grin, even in the face of poor Kitty's sufferings.

"Oh, here is Mrs Conniston," Merlin said, pushing Jack aside with scant ceremony. "I am sorry to say your daughter has had an accident, and sprained her ankle. Will you get warm water and linen bandages directly?"

"Oh, poor darling! How was it?" her mother cried.

"Never mind that," said Merlin impatiently; "I want the water and the bandages. Now"—turning to Kitty—"let me get that boot off at once."

"No, no, don't touch me!" cried Kitty.

"I promise not to hurt you," he said, speaking exactly as he might have done to a tiny child. "I will cut it off before you know I have begun."

I need not describe all the bathing and bandaging process, but when it was ended, Dr Rudersheim told Kitty she ought to go to bed at once.

"I will carry you up," he ended.

But Kitty, comforted by the bandages, and feel-

ing more like herself, rebelled vigorously against the order.

"My cousins are coming, and I am quite comfortable here," she said coaxingly. "Stay and have a cup of tea with us, Dr Rudersheim—*do*. And one of the cheese-cakes, you know."

"But, darling, how will you get up to bed?" Mrs Conniston asked. "Had you not better go whilst Dr Rudersheim is kind enough to remain? I am afraid if Jack takes you he may hurt you."

"Oh, Jack must not touch me!" with a shiver. "It was quite bad enough when Dr Rudersheim did it. I'll tell you what," turning to Merlin, "if you'll stay and have some tea, I'll go to bed directly after, if you will be so kind as to carry me."

Then Merlin Rudersheim consulted his watch, and Mrs Conniston suggested his dinner.

"Of course," she told him, "I shall be only too delighted if you can and will remain, but to lose your dinner for a cup of tea seems too bad."

"But it is high tea," put in Kitty. "Do stay."

"I was wondering what patients I have to see yet," he said thoughtfully. "I should like to stay very much; and, besides that, Miss Conniston ought to be indulged, after showing so much bravery. As for my dinner, I had a tre-

mendous lunch, out by Appleton, with a farmer patient of mine. If I remain until about eight, will you go quietly to bed then?" he asked of Kitty, as if she had been ten years old.

"Oh, yes; I will, indeed. So kind of you," Kitty murmured, holding out her slender hand to him; at which Jack rushed out of the room in a convulsion of laughter.

"And how did you manage to hurt yourself so, dearie?" Miss Conniston asked, in commiserating tones.

"Why, I don't quite know," Kitty answered. "I was walking through the Precincts, holding my bag very carefully, when down I came with a crash, and out shot my cheese-cakes."

"What! over the road?" laughed Jack, who had come in again.

"Over everywhere," spreading out her arms in an expansive gesture. "Mr Loveday was with Dr Rudersheim, and he cried out that they had got into the land of Goshen."

"Just like Loveday," laughed Jack.

Then the cousins—four or five of them—appeared, and a great deal of noisy fun followed. Amongst it all, Jack, watching Kitty and Merlin keenly, saw that his "fiver" was lost. The absent look had faded from the doctor's face, and Kitty's dark, soft eyes kept him chained beside her couch during the whole time he remained.

"All the same," thought Jack; "it's rather a shame to mislead the poor chap so."

"And you'll come and see me to-morrow?" Kitty said, rather forlornly, when the journey upstairs had been accomplished, not without pain.

"First thing in the morning; but you are not to get up until I give you leave."

"Oh!" Kitty cried, in dismay; "will it soon be well, do you think?"

"If you do as I tell you, probably very soon."

"Oh! I shall do exactly as you tell me," said Kitty promptly.

But the ankle proved not altogether easy to cure. At least Dr Rudersheim's visits continued daily for some weeks, and Kitty showed no signs of caring to leave her sofa. Jack cried out sometimes that there would be an awful bill, but Kitty with a smile bade him leave the bill to take care of itself.

"I suppose you mean to pay it out of that fiver?" he laughed.

"Then you mean to pay the fiver?" Kitty cried.

"Oh, yes! I admit the downfall of Dr Wiseacre, M.D., F.R.C.S. How soon is Dick, Stephen, or Tom to be promoted, *vice* Rudersheim superseded?"

"We shall see what we shall see," quoth Kitty vaguely.

It happened that the very next day Merlin Rudersheim entering the drawing-room of No. 6 St Olives, found Kitty lying as usual on her sofa. She was alone. She looked very well and pretty,

and not at all as if she required medical attendance.

"I don't think I need come to see you any more," he said at last.

"Not any mo—re?" echoed Kate blankly.

"You are quite recovered now. You ought to be out walking instead of lying there. It is not good for you."

"Then I won't do it any longer," Kitty said submissively, and rising as she spoke.

Surely if she meant to supersede him for Dick, Stephen, or Tom, then was the time to do it; but Kitty, trifling nervously with her rings, began in rather a quavering voice to thank him for his kindness, and to tell him how much she should miss his visits.

"I might come on visits not exactly professional," he suggested, looking up with a sudden glad light in his eyes; "only I never thought that an old bachelor like myself could give you any pleasure, and—I—I—"

What was it that interrupted him? It was Kitty's fresh, deliciously-mirthful laugh; Kitty's sweet, smiling face; Kitty's slender outstretched hands. How it all came about I cannot tell you, for it was like a transformation scene, done in a moment. Yet an instant later her dark curly head was lying close-pressed against Merlin Rudersheim's true heart.

And after a while, Jack, all unconscious of Dr Rudersheim's presence, entered noisily, and,

catching sight of the pair on the hearth, was retreating with a great "Oh!" when Kitty called him.

"Oh, Jack!" she said coolly—she always had a good nerve—"since I sha'n't have the bill to pay, I'll forgive you that fiver."





BY THE POST-TONGA.

IT was in the April of '80. The Royal Regiment of Cuirassiers, which formed part of the British forces in Afghanistan, was split up—part being stationed at Lundi Kotal, part at Jellalabad, and part at Caubool itself.

Somehow or other the Cuirassiers did not seem to care much about the country of the Ameer, and were accustomed to look back to the delights of Indian life and society very much as old people look back to the days of their youth.

The men hated it—and of the officers, why, those at Caubool envied their comrades at Jellalabad, because they were a few marches nearer to India and civilisation; while those quartered

.

outside the Fort of Jellalabad envied their fellows at Lundi Kotal, because that delectable spot was so many miles nearer to Peshawur and the Kyber Pass; and the officers of the Royal Regiment of Cuirassiers, then lying at Lundi Kotal, were thoroughly sick of the place, and would have welcomed any change of quarters, whether it took them backward or forward.

It was not altogether a bad kind of place—they admitted that; it was cool, and in a fairly pleasant situation, with nothing much to complain of except the sand-flies, which, as Scott remarked more than once to Stephen Slingsby, whose tent adjoined his, were the very devil.

And there were frequent excitements attending the intercourse between the occupants of the British camp and the gentry of the surrounding neighbourhood. For instance, one night the Shinwarris chanced to go a-raiding a shade too near the British outposts and the sentries promptly had a shot at them and “potted” a brace.

The following morning these *misérables* were traced by their blood to the village whence they came, and a detachment of troopers was sent out, and their houses burnt over their heads—a course of action which might be just in the abstract, but was undeniably hard in the reality.

Next day the Shinwarris took their revenge, and lay in wait for a camel-party returning from water; they sliced the drivers neatly in halves, and took entire charge of the camels—nine of them.

Naturally enough, the officer in command of the British camp could not stand this kind of conduct; therefore a second party of retributive revenge went out, several towers were blown up, and a goodly number of crops were confiscated.

But would the war-loving Afghans quietly submit to that? Not a bit of it! When morning light rose again upon the British camp it was found that all the pipes and drinking-troughs which supplied the camp with water had been smashed—a proceeding which left the commanding officer no alternative but to seize the leaders of the Shinwarris, who were flogged and made to pay several thousand rupees by way of indemnity.

Of course all these little interchanges of attentions were to a certain extent exciting; yet they became wearisome in time, and, moreover, big, bronzed Britons grew tired of waging unequal war against unimportant tribes.

“It is a beastly hole!” exclaimed Scott to Slingsby one day. “I vote we try and get a ten-days’ leave to go up to Jellalabad, and look up the fellows there. I don’t believe we shall

ever get any further than this—we shall just dawdle on here until the war is over, and then be sent back to India to receive a medal we have done nothing to earn.”

“Yes. It would be great fun to go on as far as Jellalabad,” answered Slingsby, willingly enough. “They say it’s no end of a jolly place. I suppose we should have to go by the Post-Tonga?”

“Yes; no use taking it out of our own gees,” Scott answered. “I shall apply for the leave at once.”

“So shall I, though I don’t believe I shall get it,” said the other.

However, the two officers did obtain the asked-for leave, partly because the commanding officer wanted to send some important letters on to a relative of his at Jellalabad, and this would give him a good chance of sending them in greater security than by a Post-Tonga, which had only a native driver and a couple of Gezalekis for escort. So, on a fine and clear April morning, Scott (the senior subaltern but one) and Slingsby (a lad barely twenty, of under a year’s service) found themselves in the Post-Tonga, or mail-cart, which ran from Lundi Khana to Jellalabad.

The journey did not begin auspiciously. The Tonga was minus its awning, and the early start caused the two officers to miss their breakfast and

to leave Lundi Khana with no more provision for the day than a little bread and meat, which they thrust hastily into their bags at the very last moment.

What a day's journey it was! Owing to the want of the awning, and being exposed to the pitiless rays of a burning sun, they soon began to feel the heat terribly, though at Dakkha, where the horses were changed, they had a few minutes' relief, and managed to obtain a bottle of execrable soda-water from the bazaar, with which to wash down the now dry and tasteless bread and meat.

And what a road it was! What a mockery to give the name of road to such a track—full of holes, where it was not strewn with big stones, and, where there were neither holes nor stones, knee-deep in sand, so that when the two Cuirassiers were not holding on like grim death to the cart or to each other, lest they should be shaken to pieces, they were choked and almost blinded with sand. By the time they reached Basawul, they were well-nigh exhausted from the combined effects of empty stomachs, the heat of the sun, and the terrible jolting of the Tonga. Fortunately they there fell in with several officers of a native regiment, who carried them off to their mess-tent, where they administered iced Stilton and bread-and-butter (food for the gods, if the gods chance to be in Afghan-

istan), with the addition of an iced peg, which acted like a charm, and made men of them again.

There, too, they exchanged the Tonga for one which had its awning in good order, so that the rest of the journey was made in less misery.

But, all the same, it was comfortless work sitting there, bumping and jolting over stones, and dragging through sand-banks, with only a couple of Gezalekis for escort, and with a native driver armed with one pistol.

"I'll tell you what, Scott," said young Slingsby, as they rattled over the broken road, "I don't half like the look of those beggars"—indicating the two Gezalekis by a jerk of his thumb. "And half-a-dozen of the enemy might cut our throats and rob the Tonga pretty easily at any moment."

"They'll have to do target for double their number of shots first," answered Scott grimly, feeling for the pair of six-chambered pop-guns which had been beside him all the day.

However, half-a-dozen of the enemy did not show, and as the shades of night were closing around, they safely reached their destination, the Cuirassiers' camp outside the fort of Jelalabad.

And what a fuss the fellows made about them ! There was iced champagne awaiting their arrival,

and in less time than it takes me to write a line, the sunburnt noses of the two weary passengers had each disappeared within a huge tumbler full of that refreshing beverage.

"I'm better!" exclaimed Slingsby gratefully. "We've had a beastly journey. I thought we should never get here."

"Fact is," exclaimed Scott, from the depths of a big chair, "poor old Baccy's been in a devil of a funk the whole way. Had an idea the Tonga would get robbed and our throats cut."

"More unlikely things have happened," Dickson laughed. "We are in a perpetual state of touch-and-go in this pernicious country. Sometimes we go out for a prowl at night—across the river to the fields on the other side, which are green and comparatively cool—but one always goes with a feeling that there may be some fanatical beggar of a Ghazi lurking about, ready to stick a knife into one's back. It's an unrestful land of pilgrimage, no mistake about it."

"Yes; we have a most appropriate hymn when we sing, as we did on Sunday :

‘Pilgrims here on earth and strangers—
Dwelling in the midst of foes.’”

"I was staying with a married sister of mine just before I came out," said Slingsby. "She

lives in Lancashire. All the time I was there she used to have a class of Sunday-school children up twice a week to coach them in the hymns for some church festival. But get 'em to sing *Pilgrims?*' Bless you, not a bit of it! The little beggars used to shout and sing with all their hearts and souls:

'*Pilgrimes here—on—nearth an' stran—GERS*'!

How I used to laugh! I didn't think then that the next time I should hear that hymn would be in Afghanistan."

"We don't often think—of what is coming," answered Dickson, with a certain gravity. "There has been a poor fanatical devil of a Ghazi, who, for the last week or two, has gone daily on to Piper's Hill, and danced in derision at us. But he was brought down at last by a clever sergeant in the garrison at five hundred yards—and he dances no more. 'Pon my word, I felt quite sorry for him; but he didn't think."

Then the two weary ones were carried off to enjoy the luxury of a tub ere they dressed for mess. It was a good time which followed. The country round was fairly peaceful—though when, after sauntering through the Fort Bazaar in the early morning in quest of odds and ends as mementoes of the city, they wished to extend

their peregrinations to the city itself, they laughed at the escort of half-a-dozen Gezalekis, bearing various antiquated matchlocks and carbines and daggers, which had to be provided according to brigade orders.

One day they passed through the city and out at the famous Caubool Gate, through which Dr Brydon nearly forty years before dragged his weary and exhausted limbs, and told the news of the cruel fate which had befallen the expedition, of which he was the sole survivor, at Juggdulluk. Thence their way lay through pleasant and refreshing fields till they reached the Ameer's palace and garden, a retreat which used to be occupied by the ruler of Caubool during the winter months, the climate of Jellalabad being more mild than that of Caubool, and the place itself secluded.

Truly they found it a lovely spot. Babbling streams ran through the gardens, kept constantly shaded by the lofty trees, the foliage of which joined overhead. All was then in a wild state, and had the beauty of untended Eastern luxuriance. Parterres and flower-beds alike were masses of promiscuous vegetation, and only gigantic Wellingtonias retained any traces of having once been cultivated, and these presented a formally trim pyramidal outline. But there were roses in vast and sweet profusion, and jasmine which loaded the air with perfume.

The palace itself consisted of two blocks of flimsy wooden buildings, one for the Ameer and one for his followers. These had plastered and stuccoed walls of a style similar to the tea-palaces in the gardens at Rosherville.

The four officers, Dickson, Laurie, Scott, and Slingsby, tramped through the empty rooms, their heavy boots and spurs echoing and jingling among the crumbling walls and torn casements. They saw from a veranda at the back of the palace, the house, carefully enclosed in a garden, where the great Eastern potentate had kept the many partners of his joys and sorrows.

On the roof, whence many a dark-eyed Eastern houri had touched the lute for her lord's pleasure, were no graceful forms, no sound of silver-stringed lutes, but in place of them the tightly-garbed and stiffly-braced figures of half-a-dozen British soldiers, who were smoking their clay-pipes and inscribing their unhallowed names upon walls which had once been sacred.

"It really is too bad," Scott murmured to Dickson, as they reached the roof, after the rank and file had saluted and tumbled down the cranky stairs. "Look here—on the very walls, within which it once was nothing less than death for man's foot to tread—

'Tommy Atkins, No. 3 Company, 440th Foot.'

And here—

‘Sarah Jane Gubbins,
The Manor House,
Newby, Yorkshire,
England.

‘The rose is red, the violet’s blue,
The pink is sweet, and so are you.
And true is he that sends you this,
So when we meet, we’ll have a kiss.’

‘Private John Smart, Royal Regiment
of Cuirassiers.’

Now isn’t that too cool? And that limb of evil,
Smart of G troop, eh?”

“Poor beggar,” returned Dickson, sighing.
“You know he was one of those drowned in
the accident in the river here, don’t you?”

“No!” in a shocked tone. “I hadn’t the least
idea of it. Poor Sarah Jane Gubbins!”

Thus reminded, they went—after they had
been to visit the remains of the cantonments of
the 42d, and thence to Commemoration Hill,
where the gallant 44th made their last stand and
were slain to a man—to the English cemetery,
where they saw the great grave fifty feet long, in
which lay the bodies of the thirty-five or forty
men drowned in the Caubool river. It was a
huge mound, on the outside of which was traced
in large white stones, the rude inscription:—



X. H U S S.



Hard by were the graves of the Cuirassiers who

had met the same fate, and according to regulation, two open graves ready to be filled at a moment's notice, painfully suggestive of that part of the service for the burial of the dead which says: "In the midst of life we are in death."

So in sightseeing and in friendly intercourse the ten days of leave passed over, and Scott and Slingsby had to take their dreary journey back to Lundi Kotal by the Post-Tonga. Never before had Scott taken leave of any of his brother officers so unwillingly, and poor young Slingsby was quite pathetic over it.

"I've got a sort of presentiment," said he, when one or two of those whom they were leaving behind chaffed him a little for being down in the mouth, "that the blessed old Tonga won't make a safe journey this time. I don't know how it is, but I cannot shake the impression off."

"Oh, nonsense! It isn't as if it was the Tonga further front," a man laughed.

"I hope you'll get there all safe, and find your presentiment a wrong one. Well, good-bye. Good-bye, Scott, old man. God bless you both."

"Let's give them a cheer," called out a young subaltern gaily.

A ringing cheer rose upon the morning air, and away the Tonga went at a full gallop, rattling

over the broken road, and jolting its occupants one against another in a way which made the little group of officers fairly shout with laughter.

"Poor beggars," said one of them; "but I should think twice, I know, before I went a whole day's journey in such a concern as that."

.
That day the Post-Tonga running between Jellalabad and Lundi Kotal was attacked, and the native driver with his pistol, and the Gezaleki escort, ran for their lives, leaving the two officers to fight it out with about a score of the enemy.

Scott's keen eyes took in the situation at a glance, and with a word to Slingsby to stick close to him, he fired a couple of shots, and sprang into a place which afforded good vantage ground, between a couple of huge boulders jutting out from the bank beneath which the road ran.

"No use attempting to fight a score of those beggars in the open," he muttered to his comrade. "Here we have just a chance, for they can only get at us one at a time."

"I've potted five of the devils," Scott muttered to Slingsby, with a grim laugh. "I wonder what they'll do next."

It seemed to the two Cuirassiers that the enemy was having a consultation. Then, after an hour or so of suspense, and another attempt

to dislodge them—as vain as the first had been, having only the effect of placing another of the Shinwarris *hors de combat* — the two soldiers heard sounds as of wounded men being cautiously moved; and presently the rumbling of the Tonga wheels over the broken and stony road told them, as plainly as words could have done, that the natives were off with their booty.

Scott stepped cautiously round the side of the boulder, and peered after the retreating party, through the now rapidly-gathering gloom of night.

“They’re all gone!” he exclaimed. “I’ll just send a couple of shots after them for luck.”

“I wouldn’t,” urged the junior—but the words came too late; the sharp report of Scott’s revolver rang upon the air, followed by an agonised yell from the retreating Afghans. Scott uttered an exclamation of extreme satisfaction.

“Now let us run for it; they’ll be back in an hour or so with the whole tribe, and would contrive to smoke us out somehow, if we stayed here, as sure as eggs are eggs.”

So they ran.

But it was hard work! They were well-nigh tired out by the long drive in the jolting Tonga, and by the suspense and tension of the last hour.

However, on they plunged — stumbling over stones in the darkness, now falling headlong as

they stepped into deep holes or ruts, now dragging their weary limbs through sand-banks, now tripping-up over the carcase of some dead horse or camel—and then—“By Jove! we have lost the track,” Scott exclaimed ruefully.

Slingsby sank down upon the ground with a groan.

“It’s no use, Scott, I’m done—I can’t go a yard further,” he said desperately. “I think the sun got at my head a bit to-day; I’ve seen nothing the last hour or more. You get on and do the best you can for yourself. You can send some fellows out to look me up, if you get in.”

“Stuff and nonsense, old man! What rubbish are you talking?” Scott cried cheerily. “You are knocked up a little, and no wonder; but as to leaving you, it’s simply absurd. I don’t know where we are, and if I chanced to get in myself I shouldn’t have the least idea how to direct anyone to find you. Take a pull at this, and we’ll have another try to find the track and get in. We *cannot* be far from camp now.”

He handed his flask to the lad as he spoke, and then, when they had rested for an hour or more, he hoisted him on to his feet and half coaxed, half chaffed him into trying to go on again.

“I do wish you would leave me and make the best of your own chance,” the lad groaned.

“Stuff and nonsense!”—keeping his hand fast under his arm and helping him along.

“It’s so senseless sacrificing two lives where one would do,” Slingsby urged.

“What rot you talk! Whose life is going to be sacrificed? Sacrificed indeed—just because your head has been a trifle touched by the sun! What melodramatic rot you youngsters do go in for, in spite of all your competitive book-learning stuff we hear so much about nowadays! I’ll tell you what it is, Baccy, that blessed new system has left no grit in any of you fellows. There’s a sight too much of ‘every-man-for-himself’ tone about the army now, without our starting it in a respectable old regiment like the Cuirassiers. Why, my dear lad, if I deserted you now, I should deserved to be hounded out of society for the rest of my days.”

But Slingsby, poor lad, had never been of a particularly robust build, and his constitution, weakened in the first instance by the effort of getting into the Service, had suffered from the effects of the enervating Indian climate, and he proved to be so utterly exhausted that, drag and pull or urge and coax as he would, Scott found there was no way of getting him a step further unless he turned himself into a “gee” for the occasion.

“Here, get on my back,” he said—and Slingsby, too weary to resist, obeyed him, and thus they stumbled on a little way further.

But it was of no use. It would have been as much as any strong man in perfect health, without anything to encumber his powers, could have done to hold his own against the difficulties of the road that night; and handicapped as Scott was by the charge of the worn-out lad, and the fact that they had lost the track, he was simply compelled to give up the attempt, at least until dawn broke over the eastern sky. It began to grow horribly cold, yet, chilled to the bone as both were, Scott would not have dared to run the risk of lighting a fire, even had materials for doing so been to hand, which they were not. Therefore he dragged Slingsby close under the scanty shelter afforded by a big stone, over which he had come such a cropper as to determine him that a longer struggle would be worse than useless, and, putting his arm round him to give him all the warmth and rest possible under the circumstances, ventured to fill and light his pipe.

Young Slingsby promptly went to sleep, and Scott puffed away, warming his fingers at the bowl of his pipe every now and again, wishing, as he thought over the events of the day, that he had been able to pot one or two more of the agreeable gentlemen who had placed them in this pleasant situation.

The pipe went out by-and-by, and Scott filled it anew. What a good thing baccy was, he

thought, and what a pity the poor lad sleeping so heavily upon his shoulder could not avail himself of its comfort. They called him "Baccy" in the regiment because he had never been able to master the noble art of smoking. Poor young Baccy! Scott had liked the lad immensely from the first day he joined. It is probable that had he been able just then to get speech of the so-called "Army Reformers"—those who have put book-learning in a superior place to the training of bone and muscle—those wise gentlemen might have experienced a new sensation.

He was still puffing slowly at his pipe, and young Slingsby still slept heavily, when, suddenly, there was a terrific howl within a few yards, which caused the sleeping lad to spring up, shaking violently in every limb.

"Good God! Scott, what's that?" he cried.

"Nothing, nothing; go to sleep again," Scott answered soothingly.

"It must be a jackal," Slingsby persisted.

"Oh, no; only a hyena after some dead horse or camel lying about."

"But it wasn't the least bit like a hyena," Slingsby objected, as the howls rang out again upon the stillness of the night air. "It's a jackal, and jackals are beastly things—worse than wolves."

"Nonsense!" Scott laughed. "Go to sleep."

"I can't sleep with that brute prowling about."

Strike a light, Scott. I believe it's close to us."

Thus bidden, Scott struck a match, holding it up so that the feeble flame should cast its rays as far as possible; and, sure enough, there, through the darkness, a yard or two in front of them, were two great angry gleaming eyes.

"Where's my revolver?" muttered Slingsby, trying to free his arm.

The older man caught his wrist.

"For Heaven's sake don't fire!" he cried. "Do you want a hundred or two of those miserable villagers down upon us? The brute probably won't come near us, whatever it is; and, if it does, it will be time enough to fire then, if a stone won't settle it."

As he spoke, he picked up a stone, which he sent flying in the direction where the eyes had been. There was the sound of a thud, it having chanced to hit the brute, followed by a terrific howling and growling.

"He will keep clear of us for the present," observed Scott, with satisfaction.

They subsided into silence once more; but though after a while Scott fell asleep with his head resting against the big stone, Slingsby had been too thoroughly awakened to close his eyes again that night, and he lay very, very still and watchful, his hand on his revolver, ready to fire at a moment's notice. True, the howling had ceased

and all was profoundly still. Then his straining ears heard a rustling and a sniffing at some short distance, as if the jackal, hyena, or whatever the brute with the glaring eyes might chance to be, were smelling its way towards them. Nearer and nearer it came, receded, grew closer still. Slingsby's heart began to beat furiously, and he levelled his revolver. Then he felt hot breath upon his face, felt the brute's feet resting upon his leg, saw the gleam of the glaring eyes just before him, and—fired!

Bang! The animal, with a fierce howl, rolled over upon Scott's outstretched legs, and lay there panting its last.

"What the devil is it?" Scott demanded, waking with a start, and trying to shake himself free of the dead weight.

"It's that brute of a jackal," Slingsby answered. "I felt his hot breath on my face, or I shouldn't have fired."

"The deuce you did! I wish he'd get off my legs, the brute," Scott said, dragging one leg from under the now dead animal by an effort. "I hope the row won't bring a pack of Shin-warris down upon us. Let us keep quiet."

In silence they waited; but apparently the report of the revolver had not done more than awake the echoes, for no natives, friendly or otherwise, appeared upon the scene.

And at last the first faint streaks of dawn

began to light up the sky, and they were able to take their bearings.

“Why, there’s the blessed old camp!” cried Scott, with a laugh, pointing to the show of canvas but a few hundred yards away. Then, looking down at their feet—“Why, Baccy, you awful young duffer, you’ve shot old Grawl, *the Colonel’s colley*!”





A N A T T R A C T I O N .



MAN was standing at one of the windows of the great dining *saal* of the New Bath Hotel at Rotterdam, listless and weary — weary of himself, perhaps, most of all. He had just arrived by the Harwich boat, after a smooth and lovely passage, which he had spent partly in company with a big meerschaum on deck and partly in cursing very audibly a wretched Frenchman, who was deplorably sea-sick, and, moreover, had had the audacity to cast himself in his wretchedness not only into Liddell's berth, but actually on to Liddell's rug.

"Miserable little brute!" Liddell growled, with all the heartlessness of a splendid sailor. "Come, get off the rug at least!" Then, finding

that the Gaul did not understand one word of English, added, ‘ Ugh, you wretched little beggar ! Who would be a Frenchman, I wonder ! ’

That, however, was all over and done with, and he had reached his destination for that day. He had had a tub and a shave, and a change of clothing, yet his temper did not improve, or, to be quite correct, his weariness of heart did not pass away. To a casual observer he was just a big, fine, fair-haired, long-limbed man, belonging to the rich upper classes ; yet a keener eye might see weary shadows under the eyes and a dissatisfied droop of the mouth under the trim brown moustache. It was not the face of a happy man.

He looked at the big, well-shaded room, with its array of big looking-glasses, its long tables down the centre of the floor, and its little cosy ones beside the windows ; he looked at the bill of fare from which he had just ordered his breakfast, at the flowers in the vases, and then at those blooming among the rockeries out in the bit of a quadrangle which he supposed the hotel people were pleased to call a garden, and then he heard a girl’s voice outside under the veranda say, “ Oh, Tom, we can’t go out yet ; I must write home to-day. I’ve never written a word since—since Thursday.”

He could not see Tom, but he heard a man laugh, a conscious sort of laugh, followed by the

fizz of a fusee and the odour of newly-lighted tobacco. The girl who had spoken sat at a little table facing the window, a pretty, fresh-coloured, silly-looking miss, evidently just out of the school-room, and as vain of the brand-new ring upon her left hand as if no one but herself had ever worn the badge of matrimony before.

"Married on Thursday," said Liddell to himself, turning his eyes from the fresh-looking face of the girl (who, as yet, was not writing home, but, resting her elbows on the table, appeared to be contemplating her Tom with fond, adoring eyes) to the only persons besides himself in the room, a late couple, who were eating their breakfast in silence and with a timid air, as if they were not quite sure whether it was the right thing to have breakfast or not.

"What the devil did I come here for?" said Liddell irritably to himself, as he looked out of the window again.

"Your breakfast is served, sare," said a smooth voice at his elbow.

He turned to the table with a dissatisfied sigh and seated himself. Well, after all, breakfast was a comfort. There were fresh strawberries, and a savoury omelette, which proved to be as good as it looked. Liddell helped himself again to it, and just then the sound of fresh voices made him turn his head towards the garden once more.

"More honeymooners," he thought in disgust, "the place is simply infested with them."

But the pair out in the garden were neither fond and foolish nor abjectly timid, and Liddell was interested—deeply interested—in spite of the indisputable fact that a good omelette is better hot than cold.

"Fritz!" cried the husband.

"Pussy, pussy, pussy!" called the wife.

Now as everyone knows who has been there to see, among the rockeries of that little made-the-most-of garden there is a fountain affair made by a single jet of water, which flows over half a dozen fragments of what has been once a sacred edifice in a tiny rivulet to a basin, which is neither of carven rock nor classic stone, but, may it please you, a good big bath sunk in the ground. Surrounded by moss-grown stones, fragments of arches and pillars interspersed with ferns and flowers, the whole affair does not look half bad, and on that particular morning such seemed to be the opinion of a great grey cat, which, overpowered perhaps by the fierce heat of the July sun, and lulled by the ceaseless splash of the falling water, had composed itself to sleep on the very brim.

"Hush—sh, Kitty!" exclaimed the husband, his eyes following the direction his wife's had taken. "Let the cat be. By Jove, what a chance!"

In a moment he had tipped Madam Puss fairly into the water, and Liddell laughed out aloud, as, with back arched and tail ruffled, she scrambled out swearing horribly and spitting anger and wrath at her enemy.

"Oh, for shame, Scott!" cried the girl. "How you delight to tease things!"

"Not bad, that, eh, Fritz?" said the husband to the waiter.

"'Orrid beast, that cat, sare," returned Fritz, grinning with delight. "Eat up all my breakfast, she did, this morning—'orrid beast!"

"Oh, did she though? Then it was a proper retribution. Well, what are you going to give us for *our* breakfast?"

Fritz repeated glibly such dishes as happened to be going.

"Would you like fish, Kitty?"

"No, thanks; omelette."

"I'll have one too. Omelette and coffee, then, Fritz."

"Strawberries, sare?"

"No," in decided tones from the girl called Kitty. "What's the good of paying a guilder here for a few when we can get as many as we can eat in the town for fourpence?"

The husband laughed, and Fritz went off shrugging his shoulders. It was nothing to him whether they had fruit or not.

"That's a nice girl," said Liddell to himself,

“and oh!—” with a long-drawn sigh, “how she does remind me of—” He broke off short, not even ending his thought, and pushed away his now spoilt omelette, attacking the strawberries instead.

The frightened pair at the next table had betaken themselves timidly off, and Tom’s wife was deep in her letter home; so Liddell rested his elbows on the table and fell to watching Kitty—he did not know who—now sauntering round the gravelled garden holding her husband’s arm. A charming girl, he pronounced her, tall, and straight as an arrow, with good grey eyes, and smooth, shining brown hair. He saw that the feet under the hem of her white serge gown were small and smart, and that her hands were slender but well-shaped and firm. And oh! how she did remind him of what he had been trying to find, or to forget, for more than three long and weary years!

As for the man, he was young, big, soldier-like, and clad in grey garments matching in lightness his wife’s pretty serge frock. Truth to tell, Liddell was not particularly interested in him, apart from the fact of his being the husband of so charming a wife.

Presently they sauntered into the *saal* and seated themselves at the table the timid couple had vacated.

“Give me the paper, please, Scott,” said she.

Now it happened that the *Times* of the previous day was at that moment under Liddell's elbow, and he presented it to her with a bow.

"Oh, thanks; but really I did not notice that you had it," she said, looking at him with her clear grey eyes—dangerous eyes they were.

"I was not reading it, indeed!" he assured her, which was true enough, for he had read every word of it the previous day.

"Well, I will look at it till you finish your breakfast and ours comes," she said, smiling.

She sat with her back to the window, her face half turned to him, her left hand resting on the back of a vacant chair. Her husband on the other side of the table was very busy balancing a knife on his forefinger. After a few minutes of perfect silence, the little fresh-faced girl outside, forgetting that there were people in the *saal*, began reading her letter aloud:—

"MY DEAREST MOTHER,—We reached Rotterdam quite safely on Friday morning. I was very sick crossing, but felt all right when I had been on shore a few hours. We like Rotterdam very much, but mean to go on to-morrow, as Tom says we are wasting time here. I am very, very happy, and Tom—"

At this point Fritz came across the garden with a tray on his shoulder, and the voice sank to a murmur. Liddell, himself smiling broadly, saw that "Scott," was showing all his very white and

even teeth, while a dozen little imps of mischief had dimpled out upon the wife's face.

"Poor innocent!" she murmured. "I wonder if I shall ever read my letters home to *you*?—you'd be edified."

The smile on his face deepened into a laugh.

"Oh, well, as to that, I looked over your shoulder yesterday and just saw one sentence—'Scott isn't very bright, though, to be sure, he is awfully good-tempered.' That was a pretty thing to say of your husband."

"Oh, that was about the luggage being lost," she answered; "all your fault."

"Not a bit of it—all yours; for you made me laugh so at those French people, I never gave the boxes a thought."

"Here is Fritz," said the wife.

She handed the paper back to Liddell with a gracious smile, and he stayed to study news that he had already seen, simply that he might have the pleasure of watching the smooth coils of her brown hair, and listening to the musical tones of her soft voice.

"Shall we go and see the monkey again, Scott?" she asked.

"If you like—let us have the strawberries first, though."

"Very good." A pause—then she spoke again: "I think we may as well go on to-morrow; we've seen everything here."

“Yes, we might have gone to-day, only you seemed to have set your mind on going to this *café chantant*.”

“Yes, I must see that; I never was at one in my life.”

“I expect it will be awfully low.”

“Then we can come out. But Fritz says not—he says it is a splendid affair; that there is a young lady singer quite ‘an attraction.’”

“Oh, Fritz—yes, I daresay” — contemptuously.

For a few moments there was silence in the large room; then the husband of the charming girl, who had taken Liddell’s not very easily pleased fancy, broke it.

“I say, Baby,” he said abruptly, “suppose we go up as far as Gouda this afternoon by rail, and look at the windows.”

Liddell threw down his paper and strode out into the garden, his heart in his mouth, and all his misery back upon him in tenfold force. The fresh-faced girl and her “Tom” had disappeared, and Liddell flung himself down upon the nearest bench and wished fiercely that he were dead, or that he had never been born. Was it three years or three centuries ago that he had addressed just such a girl by that very term?

“Oh! Baby, Baby, Baby,” he groaned. “Where have you hidden yourself all this long, weary, sickening time? Shall I *never* find you again?”

A long time he sat there, till, indeed, the blistering heat of the sun sent him indoors for shelter, and when he reached the *saal* it was empty—Scott and Baby were gone.

In looking back upon that day, Liddell always thought of it as one of the longest and most dreary he had ever spent in his life. The heat was intense; and when Rotterdam is hot, it is hot—there is never any mistake about it; the clean white streets that morning were simply glaring, for the sunshine glanced off the white houses and the bright windows and beat upon the spotless pavement until they positively scorched the feet of passers-by. Liddell found his way up to the dusty Zoo, where an unfortunate Polar bear was panting his heart out, and tropical animals were laid about their dens in evident enjoyment. He saw, but was not much gratified by the sight—for he was not at that time in the frame of mind to be pleased by trifles—the most wonderful thing in monkeys the civilised world contains—or, at least, so they said at the Rotterdam Zoo. I know not whether it be now living or dead, but a year or two back there was an ourang outang in those gardens, the oddest, quaintest little creature possible, sweet-tempered and lively, with soft fur of light stone-colour, and the wisest little dark face in the world, just like the face of a little old man. It was there then, the wonder and the pet of all; but Liddell, as I have said, was not much gratified

by the sight of it. He left the gardens and sauntered back to the town, looked in at the Groote Kerk and left it in disgust at the white-wash and the hat-pegs, dawdled along the Boompjes, and watched the different sorts of craft plying up and down or lying at anchor in the river; and then, finding that he had reached his hotel, he went in and called for brandy-and-soda in sheer desperation, and for want of anything else to do. From friendly Fritz he obtained all the information he wanted concerning the *café chantant*, and then he asked the name of the people who, like himself, intended to go there that evening.

“Er—a lady in a white dress—tall—er—and the gentleman upset the cat into the water?”

Fritz grinned at the recollection of it.

“Oh, yes, sare; Captain and Mrs Laurie; the gentleman is *officier*—I don’t know what regiment.”

Presently he saw them arrive in a cab, and then they passed through the garden to the little side stairway leading to the upper floors. So they had come back! Fritz told him that they had bought a lot of old plates at Gouda, and seemed to think they had been completely “done.” Liddell felt as sorry as if he had been done himself.

The dinner was not so good as the breakfast had been, and before the long service had come to an end the Lauries slipped away, and Liddell

immediately followed their example. He presently found himself in the *café*—a large low room, with many little marble-topped tables, and more unsteady iron chairs—on one side a stage, and on that stage a young person rejoicing in the name of Nellie d'Arlington, who, dressed in a short and scanty scarlet frock, held a golden skipping-rope in her hands, and sang, in a shrill and utterly unmusical voice, a music-hall song, of which the refrain ran,—

“Ow, me lit-tal daarrling!”

It was true that she could dance and skip to perfection, yet Liddell looked to see what effect the performance had upon Mrs Laur. She laughed a little, but laughed yet more when a fat contralto in green satin, emerald green, garnished liberally with red roses, came forward and sang with many wriggles and gesticulations, a French bravura song, winning a vociferous encore from the regular audience, which to a man shouted her name repeatedly the moment she ceased singing. But she in turn gave place to a weakly tenor, with a thick bare throat,—

“Then pretty Jane, my dearest Jane,

Ah! never look so shy—hy—hy,

But meet me, meet me in the ee—ee—eev’ning,

When the bloo—oo—oom is oo—oo—on the rye.”

But nobody seemed to mind, and some people

looked very much astonished when in the middle of the second verse the Lauries went out. Liddell would have followed them, but remembering there was nothing but bed for him if he went back to the hotel, stayed just for the next song, a ballad (Scotch), by a Miss Nelson—the attraction spoken of by Fritz the waiter.

The roar of applause which greeted the English ballad-singer caused Liddell to look back at the rough audience; then the first notes of a ballad stole through the room, and for the second time that day Liddell felt a great knot creeping up his throat, a black mist gathered before him. He turned his dimmed eyes towards the stage, and saw, a vision! A vision? Oh, no, a reality of flesh and blood; the reality of great blue pleading eyes; the reality of a mouth that he had kissed hundreds of times, but with the lips now down-drawn with misery, and oh!—most painful reality of all to see—the face he had loved all his life bearing the cruel stamp of poverty and pain.

So much for the singer, and what of the song? As the programme had promised, a ballad (Scotch); it was the song Liddell had been used to call his in the unforgotten days which would never come back to singer or listener any more; a brave and spirited Jacobite ballad, sung without bravery or spirit at all, yet with a passionate ring in the refrain which made her

stolid hearers move their solemn heads to and fro and tap fat fingers against fat knees in pleasure and sympathy: which told Liddell's fast-beating heart that, whatever had been the cause of their parting in the bygone days, she had not deserted him for lack of love.

“ Follow thee, follow thee, wha wadna follow thee ?
Lang has thou lo'ed and trusted us fairly !
Charlie, Charlie, wha wadna follow thee ?
King o' the Hieland hearts, Bonnie Prince Charlie ! ”

When he had watched her off the stage, Liddell got up and staggered out into the soft night air. Behind him he heard the noisy applause, and loud calls for “ Home sweet Home.” Would she come? Yes, the sweet voice stole out again, and the *café* was hushed to silence in a moment; he could have sworn that tears were standing in the dark-set blue eyes; he could hear them in every one of the dear familiar notes. He clenched his hands hard, and tried to recall the past with calmness.

“ Be it ever so humble,
There's no place like home.”

Unmistakably was it the cry of a homeless woman. He could not understand it. More than three years before she had given him up, he who loved her more than all else that the wide world

held. She had deliberately lost herself, so that until this very day he had never been able to find even a trace of her. And now that he had by mere chance, through the power of attraction of a strange woman who had recalled her more vividly to his memory than anyone had ever done before—now that he had found her, he had found her—how? As a singer in a Dutch *café chantant*. Oh! it was hard; it was the most cruel blow that had ever fallen upon the man in all his thirty-and-two years of life.

He never hesitated, even while he stood under the summer night-sky battling with himself; he could wait; he would make her explain one way or the other. After this night uncertainty and doubt should be at an end, and he would be either in Paradise or in hopeless weariness which would last until his life's end. Yes, he would wait; and presently she came out, not through the *café*, but by a private door, and passed him by without a look. But Liddell strode after her, and touched her shoulder.

"Baby," he said.

The girl started violently and stood staring at him.

"Charlie!" she exclaimed.

Liddell took hold of her hand very tenderly.

"Oh, Baby! How could you sing *my* song *there?*"

"Have you been *there?*" shivering.

"Yes! Shall I tell you frankly why? Because I saw at my hotel this morning a lady who reminded me of you. I went just for the pleasure of looking at her. And then I saw you and heard, well"—trying to keep the triumphant ring out of his voice and succeeding very badly—"well, I heard as plainly as your voice could tell me that it was not because you did not love me that I got that cruel letter three years ago."

"Oh, no—it was not *that*," half turning away from him and looking through the night to the lights twinkling along the river.

"Then why was it? No, I will not let you go until you have told me," as she tried to draw her hand from his.

"Then I will tell you," she answered, "and then you will be cured, thoroughly and effectually cured, of any love which may yet be lingering in your heart for me. You know that I lived all my life with Aunt Mary?"

"Yes, and when she died you threw me over. Did you think *I* should care that she had no money to leave you?"

"Oh, no; I always told you Aunt Mary's income died with her. It was that when she died she left a letter for me telling me the truth about my father, of whom I knew nothing, except that he died in Australia when I was very young."

"Well?"

"Well!" she turned sharply round and fairly

flashed out her next words. "Well, my father was transported for forgery, and died by his own hand before he had been in Australia a month—there!"

Liddell kept her hand more firmly than before.

"You might have given me the chance of showing you that I loved you, in spite of your father's sins and shortcomings," he said gently; "but, tell me, is that all that you have put between us?"

"*All!* Is it not enough?" she asked. "Besides, there is that place," pointing in the direction of the *café*.

"My Baby, could you not find something to do better than that?" he asked, ignoring her question.

"It is hard to want—bread," she answered.

"I believe," he asserted, "it is harder to want—love. It is true I would rather you had had a father who behaved himself properly, and that you had not sung in a *café chantant* for your very bread, and yet," putting his arm round her and drawing her to him, "I have loved you all my life, and these are evils we can bury decently out of our sight for ever, if we try. I wish you had trusted me at the first, for, as a matter of fact, though I could hardly be such a cad as to throw the knowledge in your face, I have known all about your father ever since I was a lad; for it happened to be my father's name he took for his experiments. And now," speaking very sternly

and giving her a little shake, "let me tell you I shall not give you the chance of 'losing' yourself again, *Miss Nelson*."

"I don't want to lose myself any more," said Miss Nelson meekly.





CHILDHOOD'S MEMORIES ;

OR, ONE TOO MANY FOR HIM.

“**I** DON'T think,” said Marcus Orford one day to Lester Brookes and Wolfe Austin, “that there is such a dull, dead-alive hole as Pontchester on the face of the earth.”

“Better than Suakim, anyway,” answered Brookes.

“I don't know—I really don't know. At Suakim one had something now and then to relieve the dead level and monotony of parade and mess, mess and watering-order, watering-order and field-day, which prevails here. Hang it all, there was the constant scare about cholera, to say nothing of enteric fever—and now and then there was the chance of a brush with a few of the miserable black jokers we called ‘the enemy,’ in and out of the miserable scrub and

stones which they call the 'Soudan.' And then one always had the *hope* of a real, proper go in and smash up of the whole lot of them; and, besides, there was always shooting on hand, and that blessed old railway to jeer at."

"Seems to me that the blessed old railway did most of the jeering," observed Austin, with a laugh, "especially over the Pears' soap business."

"Yes, by Jove, and most of the swagger too. Why, there was one little chap like a shrimp—sort of director-general of everything in particular—who gave one the impression that if he was just let to go his own way, and take his own precautions and make his own arrangements, the whole line would be made to Berber itself, without a hitch or a drawback, while our people were thinking about beginning it."

"'Pon my honour," he continued reflectively, "I never heard the little chap enlarging on the situation without my memory turning instinctively to the days when I was going about with a nurse."

"Why?" asked Orford.

"Why? Cock Robin, you know. I never saw Cock Robin personified before.

"'Who killed Cock Robin?'

'I,' said the sparrow,

'With my bow and arrow,

I killed Cock Robin.'"

"You've got rather mixed, my friend," was Orford's laughing comment. "Cock Robin was killed—'twas the sparrow you meant to liken the director-general to."

"Ah, yes, yes. Anyway, he always used to make me think of the ballad," returned Austin coolly; "and whichever it was, he wasn't worth staying in Suakim for—as a study of human nature, you know. I admit Pondichester *is* dull; but you can get to Town in a couple of hours, and you can get your newspaper."

"Ye—es! Who wants newspapers, though? Jam full of a lot of stale rubbish as to who has been spouting, and how many trees the G.O.M. cut down yesterday. Oh!" stretching his long legs out in front of him, and throwing his arms above his head with a terrific yawn, "if something doesn't happen to break this awful monotony soon, I shall be doing something desperate. And yet—what can one do? Hang it, the old regiment isn't the same since Urquhart went and got himself made a blooming swell of a colonel. 'Pon my word, I never thought I should think so little of Urquhart as I've done since he was made chief."

"Can't see any difference in him," put in Lester Brookes.

Orford looked aside with an air of pity for the other's ignorance.

"Oh, *you* were only born yesterday," he said

coolly. "*You didn't know Urquhart in his palmy days; he's been doing the heavy-father style of business ever since you joined. But he was a good fellow once,*" with a sigh of regret for the bygone days — days of fearful and wonderful practical jokes, in which Urquhart's fertile brain, Urquhart's grim humour, and Urquhart's imperturbable manner, combined with Orford's dare-devil, headlong recklessness, had kept the regiment not only alive but in a state of apprehension and disquietude.

"Do you remember, Austin—or was it before your day?—when Urquhart and Archie and I groomed the Colonel's charger with cayenne pepper? By Jove, how the Chief did sneeze! And every now and then, when the pepper happened to get to the skin and touched the old gee up a bit, he gave a great shake as if he'd been the most blood-and-thunder war-horse in creation, and—pouf!—up went the clouds of pepper into the Chief's disgusted face. Yes, and 'my friend, the Duke,' was down too, and sitting like an image or a fate at the Chief's side; and presently the pepper began to spread, and the Duke's gee got a taste of it; and then the Duke began to sneeze pretty nearly as bad as the Colonel, and his charger, being the youngest, and considerably the freshest of the two, took it very much worse than the Colonel's, and began to spin round and round like a teetotum. Lord! I

never saw a better joke in my life—the horse spinning frantically round, and the Duke sneezing and spluttering—the Colonel so bad he couldn't attend even to the Duke—and every shake of his gee making it worse and worse. Lord! it *was* a joke, that, and the cream of it came afterwards. When we had got rid of the Personage, he asked Urquhart what the devil could be the matter with the two brutes? And Urquhart looked at him in his wooden, solemn way, and said he was sure he didn't know; he had heard there were several cases of glanders in the town. *Glanders!* And now Urquhart does the heavy-father style, and hasn't a ghost of a joke left in him. I'll tell you what it is; it's a pitiable sight to see a once right-good fellow in command of a regiment; it's so demoralising."

He rose up from his chair as he spoke, stretched himself, settled the hanging of his sword, regarded the reflection of his face in the pier-glass with a melancholy air, put his forage cap at the proper angle, and went, with the clatter and jingle which usually distinguished all Marcus Orford's movements, out into the square.

Lester Brookes looked after him in surprise.

"I never heard him grumble like that before," he said at length.

Austin laughed.

"Oh, we may look out for squalls now," he

answered. "When Orford begins to find out that a place is simply too slow to live in, he generally sets his wits to work to do something or other to liven it. One of us will suffer before the week is out."

And then he went off into a recital of all Marcus Orford's most brilliant jokes, ending,—

"He's been extra quiet of late, so he'll have that as well as the dulness of Pontichestor to make up for."

Meantime Marcus Orford was crossing the barrack square at a swinging pace, his vexed eyes surveying the different buildings in sight with disgust and weariness, his vexed soul going back pertinaciously to the little man at Suakim, who had been wont to recall Wolfe Austin's childish memories in the shape of the little nursery rhyme:—

"Who killed Cock Robin?"

"There was a nursery tale," he said to himself as he reached the stable where his horses had their abode, "about a bath-room and some tar. Now, what the devil was that? For the life of me, I can't remember."

There was not a soul in the stable, and he went in musing still, punched his horses with a good deal of "Whoa, my man," and "So, so, old lady," then stood still in the stall where

his favourite was, and regarded that animal with a stare of puzzled reflection. "What the devil was it?" he repeated impatiently.

But although the beautiful satin-coated person, who rejoiced in the name of Cigarette, and was known in the regiment as the cleverest thing that ever went on four legs, rubbed her velvet nose against his cheek, and looked softly at him out of her languishing eyes, this particular memory of his childhood did not return to him very readily. You see a good deal had happened to him since nursery rhymes and fairy tales had been the fashion with him. Nor did it return to him much more easily when he had bade adieu to Cigarette and was swinging across the square again, this time in the direction of his quarters.

But it came back in the course of the afternoon, bit by bit, "line upon line," as the little goody book has it, and gradually the whole scheme of a new and brilliant practical joke was built up within the odd store-room which Marcus Orford called his mind.

He never told a soul what his intentions were, but when the idea of a confidant presented itself to him, quoted with a grin a part of the rhyme which had helped to suggest the new *divertissement* to him,—

"‘I,’ said the sparrow, ‘with my bow and arrow,
I shot Cock Robin.’"

So he decided that, although in a general way one of the most sociable men in the regiment, he would shoot this particular Cock Robin without any assistance whatever.

He selected Lester Brookes as the best subject for his operations, partly because that young gentleman, not having been very long in the regiment, and having joined very shortly before the Soudan campaign, when Marcus Orford had other things to occupy him than to elaborate practical jokes, had never been honoured by his distinguished consideration in that respect, and it was also partly because Brookes' room was immediately above his own, always an advantage, as doubtless my reader is well aware.

The story which he had recalled with so much difficulty was one in which figured the usual lovely and ill-used princess of spotless soul and all other angelic attributes, and a wicked queen stepmother, who by the assistance of the black arts had changed the eleven or twelve brothers of the lovely princess into as many wild swans or geese. There was a long and touching history of how the lovely damsel took a vow of silence while she made eleven shirts out of churchyard flax (thereby laying herself open to the pleasant charge of being a vampire, or a ghou! who lived on dead men's flesh, and, greedy thing that she was! sat up at night to eat it), and finally, having succeeded in the restoration to human guise of her

many brothers, the story winds up with a pleasant but rather grim description of the death of the stepmother queen; how, when attended by all her ladies, she entered her bathroom, she found awaiting her a pit dug beneath the carpet at the doorway—a pit filled with boiling pitch—into which she fell and thus made an end of herself upon earth and her machinations for ever. And this, in a modified form, was the joke (save the mark) which Marcus Orford proposed to prepare for the delectation of his brother officer, Lester Brookes. It would take days to accomplish. In the first place he had chosen to work single-handed, so that he could have no assistance; in the second, it was a scheme that would require the most delicate care that it might remain an absolute and profound secret.

Of course he was aware from the first that pitch would be an impossible agent for him to employ. For one thing its use would carry the joke beyond even the limits of a barrack joke, and for another, the smell would betray him before the time was ripe for the *dénouement*.

Well, when he came to go seriously into the matter, he found that any idea of preparing a literal pitfall for Lester Brookes was quite out of the question, there not being more than the depth of a foot or thirteen inches between the boards and the ceiling of the room below it. This plan therefore he was compelled to abandon; but after

much care and deliberation he thought out another which promised to work *even better* when it came to be put into execution. This was to poise an immense tub, or rather a zinc pan, immediately over the door, so arranged by means of cords, pulleys, springs, and other appliances, that when the unlucky occupant of the room should enter after the trap was set for his reception he should receive the entire contents over his person. Of course there was no question of the joke being either original or particularly brilliant; only to the rather stale original he conceived the idea of adding a plan by which about a hundred Seidlitz powders should come in contact with the water in its descent and go off about Brookes's ears with a fizzing and a spluttering calculated, Orford thought, to scare him pretty nearly out of his five senses.

In order to get the full effect of the joke and to have it in the most perfect working order, Marcus Orford went in for private rehearsals in his stable, to the astonishment and delight of his groom, who whispered in his chum's ear that Mr Orford had got some rare joke on, he'd be bound, and who laughed immoderately when he saw the Colonel's mastiff, Zug, coming tearing out of the stable, howling and yelling, with his tail between his legs and all his handsome tawny coat seething and boiling like a volcanic eruption.

But Private Stokes, first groom to the Honour-

able Marcus Orford, did not find the matter quite so funny when *he* had a practical and personal experience of what his master's rare joke must have felt like to the disgusted and astonished Zug. He went slowly and quite without suspicion into his stable one fine morning, intent only on his own business, which happened to be the doctoring of a slightly-swollen ankle caused by a somewhat too quickly obedient "come over" of one of his master's horses. Thus he came in for the full benefit of that same master's elaborate arrangement of zinc pan, cords, pulleys, and springs, of cold water and Seidlitz powders ; and when that master saw the big drenched and half-blinded dragoon stagger out into the open, a seething mass of white foam, d——ing and spluttering as he dashed the water from his eyes, and shaking his short crop of curly hair as vigorously as ever the mastiff Zug had done, he just rushed off to the privacy of his own quarters, and, locking the door, gave way to the most extravagant transports of delighted joy, for his little plan was safe, and all his elaborate care and trouble had been brought to a perfect end.

I do not think that it very often happens in this life that a man has the opportunity of not only eating his cake but also of having it. Yet, for a time, that was a pleasure which fell to Marcus Orford's lot ; he had the double pleasure of seeing how his volcano worked (by practical application)

and of having still the anticipation of how it would work when put into execution for the final trial; the dog had been good, and the man had been better, but it was from Lester Brookes that Marcus Orford expected to extract the richest cream of enjoyment. He had given the most minute and elaborate care to the private rehearsals in the stable, but all that was as nothing to the jealousy with which he prepared every detail, and examined every point, so that there should not be the smallest hitch in the final working.

Unfortunately, like some of the others, he had mistaken Lester Brookes altogether. The unassuming manner and tone which was that young gentleman's habitual form, had deceived him completely, and he was in utter ignorance of the fact—which was the true state of affairs—that he had to deal with a specimen of a long-headed, hard-thinking class, who if not quite so quick-witted as himself, was considerably the most clever at the game of putting two and two together.

Now, Lester Brookes, bearing in mind the words which Wolfe Austin had let drop in the ante-room a few days before—words assuming a distinct air of prophecy, to the effect that the Black Horse in general might look out for squalls now—came to the conclusion that if the regiment in general might be on the look-out for squalls, he in particular, being comparatively a new-comer and

entirely a stranger to Orford's little ways of amusing himself and enlivening dull quarters, might, nay, had best, be on the lookout.

Consequently he went on his quiet way, and kept his eye as closely as possible on all Marcus Orford's movements, with the result that he managed to gather exactly of what his newest scheme of amusement consisted, and had the satisfaction even of being able to share in Marcus Orford's enjoyment of Zug's astonishment and fury, and equally to enjoy the sight of Private Stokes as he staggered spluttering and vociferating out of his master's stable.

"By Jove!" said Lester Brookes within himself, as he went off into Pontichestor, after having had his laugh out, "it's the cleverest dodge I ever heard of. But I wonder who the devil he means to get the benefit of it? The Colonel, I shouldn't wonder. Urquhart's backslidings in the joking way seem to have cut Orford to the very heart."

Not for one single moment did this modest and unassuming young man imagine that he was to be the one honoured by all this preparation and elaborate care; and when a few hours later he suddenly grasped the truth that such was indeed the fact, he honestly thought so little of himself that he considered it neither more nor less than a thousand pities that it should be what he called "wasted" upon him.

"Seems such a pity," said he, as he reached the principal street of the dull little town, "and particularly when I know as much about it as Orford himself. Well, we must see if we can't improve upon that, any way."

Therefore on his way back to barracks, as he happened to run against Urquhart, who was going in the same direction, he made himself so agreeable to that officer—who, by-the-bye, was privately of opinion that Brookes was one of the few sensible men the regiment contained,—that they not only walked all the way there together, but parted with a promise from the Chief to come round to Brookes' quarters in half-an-hour's time to see an old engraving which the younger man had picked up in a second-hand shop for a mere trifle a few days previously.

Having parted on this understanding with the Colonel, Brookes betook himself to the ante-room, where he found half-a-dozen of the fellows, among them Marcus Orford, in possession.

Marcus Orford addressed him with a mild urbanity which would have made him smell a rat even had he suspected nothing before; it made several other heads turn in that direction also, and several pairs of eyes met one another with a questioning look, which being interpreted meant: "What devilment is Marcus Orford up to now, I wonder?" and at the same time several

minds made themselves up to a resolve that during the next hour or two, where Brookes went they would go, and that whatever might happen to be the devilment which Marcus Orford had in his mind, they would contrive to have their share of the harvest thereof.

And they had it — Marcus Orford, Lester Brookes, and the rest—in a manner they little dreamt of. For presently, when the half-hour had expired, Lester Brookes rose from his chair with an admirably-feigned carelessness.

“Well, I must be off. I bought an old engraving the other day for twopence-halfpenny, so to speak, and the Colonel is coming to my room to see it. I expect he’s there by this time.”

As Brookes sauntered slowly out of the ante-room, up jumped Orford simultaneously with the others.

“I’m going to my room—got some letters to write,” he explained.

It was odd, but the others were all going to their respective quarters with the same intention; more oddly still, although several of them, Marcus Orford among them, had their quarters in the lower corridor, they all seemed to be seeking them in the upper storey, in which Lester Brookes’ were situate.

And as he, followed by the others on tip-toe, gained the upper passage, Colonel Urquhart, accompanied by an old gentleman with white

curly hair and a smart velvet coat, came up the stairs at the other end of it and turned into Brookes' room.

"Yes," they heard the Colonel say, "Brookes tells me it's a genuine Bartolozzi after Michael Angelo, and he picked it up for seven-and-sixpence in a little broker's place down the town."

"Are there any more?" broke in the velvet-coated old gentleman eagerly—and then there was a yell, a spluttering, *and* a swearing, the volubility of which astonished even those stalwart and anything but straight-laced dragoons.

"What is it?" asked Orford, hurrying up the stairs.

"*It's your FATHER,*" answered Austin.





LIKE A GREEN BAY TREE.



THE people of that neighbourhood said they flourished like a green bay tree! They were young, rich, of good position, birth, appearance; they lived in a lovely old house, the grounds of which were "laid out in ruins," as Mrs Bunter was so anxious to have hers; they were clever, undeniably so; they were both red-hot Radicals, though husband and wife had alike come of staunch Conservative families, but as Eustace Vane was accustomed to remark, when the circumstance was noticed,—“We are wiser than our fathers.”

Those who remembered old Squire Vane and the present Mrs Vane's father, William Loftus, Rector of Vanedene, a village about three miles west of Garthampton, were of opinion that Eustace Vane was wrong in saying so; but, of course, wisdom

must be more or less a matter of opinion, and Eustace Vane, like any other man in this free and enlightened land of liberty, was able to hold what opinions he chose upon that subject, as upon any other.

But it was not on account of their political opinions that the Garthampton folks likened the Vanes of Vanedene to the ungodly, who, as the Book says, flourish like a green bay tree, but because, as a few outspoken ones graphically put it, *they believed in nothing*.

They had been married more than five years at the time when my story begins. Of their political opinions they made no secret, neither did they of their utter absence of religious ones. They simply had none: they believed in nothing, hoped for nothing, looked for nothing—that was all.

To such people as attempted to argue with them they were perfectly civil and friendly. They said, “It is very kind of you to try and convince us of the truth of your religious views, but we don’t believe in a world to come; we don’t believe in the resurrection of the dead, life after death; we don’t believe in heaven, or the divine truth of the Bible, nor yet in the story of the Gospel. It is all very pretty. If you find pleasure and comfort therein, we have no wish to deprive you of it. We don’t want you to be of our way of thinking; we don’t wish to be unfriendly about it. We merely wish to be left

alone in our belief, which is in this life present and nothing else. We don't go to church because we don't believe in God, and we are not hypocrites. We don't sit all Sunday with our hands folded, because we believe the Sabbath is an institution found by long experience to be necessary for the well-being of a people. We have no desire to hinder you from your way, nor to make you go ours—we only want to be left alone."

So, at length, left alone on religious subjects they were. Only one lady, having a vivid remembrance of the dead and gone Rector of Vane-dene, suggested to his daughter that it was impossible she could believe, really believe, that she had parted with him for ever when she saw him laid in the narrow house where we shall all lie some day.

"My father was a very good man," said Mrs Eustace Vane quietly. "He served his day and generation faithfully—his good acts will spread in ever-widening circles down the never-ending ages of eternity. On his gravestone is written—'His works do follow him.'"

"You have actually quoted the book you profess to disbelieve!" cried her friend.

"I acknowledge much of its wisdom," said Mrs Eustace Vane, with her superior smile—and after that her friend gave it up.

However, in spite of their heathenish life, they were very much sought after by the Garthamp-

ton people. They were intensely respectable. Eustace Vane would as soon have thought of making a hole in the river Garth as of telling a lie or breaking faith with the very poorest of his tenants. They never quarrelled with each other; their servants remained with them for much longer periods than is usual in these days of change, and when they did leave, they never accused their master or mistress of drinking, as is the ordinary way of servants.

True, they played tennis and waltzes on Sunday, and went for long tramps when other people were at church, Laura in a cotton gown, with a basket for mushrooms or wild flowers, as the season and chance might be; Eustace in knickerbocker suit and straw hat. But they were young and agreeable, so Garthampton folks made a virtue of shutting their eyes to the one proceeding and their ears to the other, and if, among themselves, they sometimes talked in short whispers, why, the Vanes never heard them, and if they had done so, would have said, "We are wiser than our fathers."

Such persons are not a novelty; they are not entirely an outcome of this scientific age. Did not the wisest of kings write, "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit, there is more hope of a fool than of him." As for the Vanes, they were truly wise in their own conceit, and continued so, going in largely for the higher education of women, entering with zealous fervour into every scheme

that cropped up for the furtherance of science or art. Mrs Eustace—as she was still frequently called, though her husband's mother had been dead some time—was an accomplished musician, an artist of no mean skill, and a woman altogether of so strong a grasp of mind that many people wondered how it had come about that her spiritual belief was so lamentably wrong.

She went in for everything in the woman's rights way—in spite of her not being herself a “man's left;” she made speeches at elections in favour of Liberal candidates—very fair speeches too, for one of a sex which, as a rule, cannot be said to shine in that way. She went heart and soul into certain social questions which most men would rather have their wives leave alone. She read every book of note that came out, not meaning novels. Then, too, she dressed herself like an old picture, and her collection of antique violins and pots was something absolutely wonderful. Of the pair, she had the stronger mind. Eustace Vane repeated all his wife's remarks and theories, with a good deal of “haw haw,” which gave them the air of being his own. He looked handsome, and that was about all.

For five years this state of things had continued. There were simple-minded folk in the neighbourhood who wondered with a look askance, why the Almighty did not send a judgment down upon them, crushing Vanedene and its occupants at one blow; forgetting that the day

of miracles is over, and that God moves in a mysterious way. And there were other simple folk, to whom troubles came thick and fast, who felt themselves aggrieved that life went so smoothly for the owners of Vanedene. What was the good, they asked, of being faithful and believing, if the green bay tree—otherwise the Vanes—was permitted to flourish under their very eyes? It was enough to dishearten any one.

But after a while there came a change! It crept upon that portion of the world which called the Vanes friends very gradually. Mrs Vane's name was withdrawn from prominence in several of the societies to which she acted as president, secretary, one of the executive committee, and the like, and she sank to the comparative obscurity of a subscribing member only. She did not at present feel equal to the duties, she explained.

People wondered a little, and at length the real meaning of it oozed out. There was at last a prospect of an heir coming to the Red House. Then people wondered no longer, but most of them laughed instead, and asked one another what manner of child it would be.

"I should think," one lady laughed, "it will be born with a full allowance of teeth and be able to play half-a-dozen instruments, and speak several languages fluently."

But it wasn't. It came into the world and squalled—just like any other baby. It gurgled over its food and crumpled up its pink dimpled hands just like any other. It was a very pretty child, even at that early stage of its career, with big blue eyes and soft flaxen hair as smooth as silk. Eustace Vane went and stood beside his wife's bed with his hands in his pockets, regarding them both through his eyeglass, finally telling her that they made as charming a picture, by Jove! as he ever remembered to have seen. Then he bent down and kissed her, touching the child with his lips, as if it were an afterthought. And after that she went down to his club, and announced, when he was congratulated, that his small son was a very queer little beggar, a very queer little beggar indeed.

Strangely enough, neither he nor any one else noticed the change which had come over his wife. She did not recover very fast, and the affair had pulled her down far more than any one would have thought possible for a woman who could tramp her twenty miles a day and be fairly fresh at the end of it. For many days she lay in her bed or on her sofa strangely silent, resting her cheek against the child's blonde head. From her window she could see the old church, and the churchyard where her father slept; the church where, in the days of her childhood, she had prayed and sung Sunday after

Sunday, as she never did now. She could see the pure white cross which marked her father's resting - place, and she knew by heart the words :—

“His works do follow him.”

Eight years he had been dead ; she had not thought so much of him in all those eight years as she had done since her baby came. How proud he would have been to see his grandson — how delighted to have added another to the long list of Vanes in the baptismal register.

“Eustace,” she said suddenly one day, when the child was more than a month old, “I should like to have a dance for the christening.”

“For the WHAT, my dear?” asked Eustace, with mild astonishment.

“The Christening.”

“The child is already named ; I registered him as William Loftus Vane. Did I not tell you?”

“Yes, dear — but the ceremony — ” she began.

“You don't mean to say,” he interrupted, pointing to the church, “that you want to take the poor child over there and water him, as if he were a young vegetable and you wanted him to grow the quicker? Or, perhaps, you intend going through the ceremony of thanksgiving also?”

"Oh, no—I forgot," blushing scarlet at his sarcasm. "But I *should* like a dance, Eustace."

"Dearest, you shall have a dozen dances, if they will please you," he answered, kissing her. "Don't let these morbid fancies get hold of you—you know you are not really strong yet."

So the child was *not* christened, and Eustace Vane's sarcasm having killed the yearning in the mother's heart, she went in for her advanced ideas more warmly than ever, and the green bay tree flourished greener and greener. Truly, it did seem hard upon the simple folk who had so many troubles.

Upon one point every one was agreed, and that was that when the days of babyhood were passed, the little heir of Vanedene began to prove himself a wonder after all. At five years old he knew as much as a child of ten, or of twice ten, for the matter of that; he could repeat poetry in three or four languages by the page; could play violin and piano; had written a story, printed by his parents, who were wiser than their fathers had been, and circulated among their friends; in short, he was an infant prodigy, a fine, handsome, healthy, intelligent child, forced far beyond his years and beyond his strength.

No simple toys were his by day—no simple prayers he said by night; indeed not one night out of seven did he have the sound healthy sleep

childhood ought to have. No, his toys were mechanical models of the most complicated description, and night after night he was kept up till midnight at his mother's parties, or at circus, theatre, concert, and the like, until the handsome eyes would stay open no longer, and he was carried off to bed, worn out by fatigue, yet too thoroughly excited to sleep.

No one, except his parents, was surprised when little Willie fell ill, as he did one dull and dreary November day, after being up till one in the morning at a child's fancy ball got up for his pleasure. No one was surprised, but his parents were filled with a horrible agony of fear, when the doctors who had been called in to attend him announced the case to be inflammation of the brain, and almost hopeless.

Quickly the news spread through Vanedene till it reached the Rectory. Then, at once, the Rector sallied out and took his way towards the Hall. Mrs Vane came to him.

"Is it true?" he asked.

"Oh! Too true—too true!" she sobbed.

"Let me baptise him," said the good man, taking her hand, and looking at her with kindly pity.

"It will do no good," she cried. "Oh! my boy."

"Oh! Mrs Vane," he said earnestly, "why will you disregard the truth? It is *God* who has sent this trouble upon you. If the child is taken, can

you find it in your heart to lay him over there and leave him for ever?"

"For ever!" she echoed.

"Can you bear the villagers, amongst whom you have lived all your life, those who have loved the child almost as much as yourself, to say that you buried him like a dog?"

"*Like a dog!*" she cried, in an anguished voice.

"Can you refuse for him—your little innocent child—the glorious inheritance which your husband and you have refused for yourselves?"

"Oh! no, no!"

"Show me the way," said the Rector, drawing her towards the door.

She led him to the room where the child lay fighting his last struggle with the grim King of Terrors. Eustace Vane stood by the bed, a very haggard and anxious Eustace Vane, utterly crushed by the blow even then falling upon him. The Rector did not lose a moment, but even as he took the basin of pure water, which was brought at his request, there was a sigh—a shiver—a sudden opening of the blue eyes—a surprised smile and a murmur of "Mother!"—and then Mrs Vane sank upon her knees with an exceeding bitter cry, "Too late—too late!" and Eustace Vane realised that they were childless.

Into his mind there came a remembrance of a lovely summer's day, when his wife had spoken of the child's christening—of his own sarcastic words—of the scarlet flush upon her cheek as

she heard them—of his frequent boast, “We are wiser than our fathers.”

And then there came to him out of the Book which he had despised, a message straight from the God whom he had denied: “Behold! your house is left unto you desolate.”

THE END

List of Works by John Strange Winter.

“The author to whom we owe the most finished and faithful rendering ever yet given of the character of the British soldier.”

Mr RUSKIN in the *Daily Telegraph*, January 17, 1888.

CAVALRY LIFE.
REGIMENTAL LEGENDS.
BOOTLES' BABY.
HOUP-LA!
IN QUARTERS.
ON MARCH.
PLUCK.
ARMY SOCIETY.
GARRISON GOSSIP.
MIGNON'S SECRET.
THAT IMP!
MIGNON'S HUSBAND.
A SIEGE BABY.
CONFESSIONS OF A
PUBLISHER.

WORKS BY JOHN STRANGE WINTER.

CAVALRY LIFE.

"'Cavalry Life' is one of the best books of its kind that we have seen. Full of 'go,' and the style is easy and lively."—*Saturday Review*, January 14, 1882.

"The author also has the power of depicting pathetic scenes with taste and truth, and with no introduction of false sentiment."—*The Standard*, April 7, 1882.

REGIMENTAL LEGENDS.

"Light and lively; they sketch soldiers and their ways and manners from the life, and ought to be popular in mess ante-rooms and officers' quarters. . . The style is invariably easy and gentlemanly."—*The Times*, February 8, 1883.

"They are good, honest, soldier-like stories."—*The Standard*, January 18, 1883.

BOOTLES' BABY.

"Miss Mignon is a delightful little bit of childhood."—*Saturday Review*, July 25, 1885.

"'Bootles' Baby' is a model short story. It can have few equals."—*Yorkshire Post*, August 26, 1885.

"'Bootles' Baby' is unapproachable."—*Bristol Mercury*, August 15, 1885.

HOU-P-LA!

"It proves that he can not only write in an easy and lively style which carries his readers along with him, but that he has also at his command a fund of true pathos."—*The Morning Post*, September 11, 1885.

"The charm of Mr Winter's stories is in their simplicity, their genuine human sympathy, and their constant liveliness and humour."—*Hereford Times*, August 15, 1885.

PLUCK.

"'Pluck' is written in the racy, kindly, hearty style which distinguishes all this author's work. While he writes as he does now he will always command a public who will buy all he writes, to have something to turn to in moments of depression, and when they have almost come to the conclusion that life is not worth living."—*Whitehall Review*, June 17, 1886.

"To our mind, among the many interesting little works of fiction written by the popular author of 'Bootles' Baby,' this is one of the best."—*Publishers' Circular*, June 1, 1886.

F. V WHITE & Co., 31 Southampton Street, Strand.

WORKS BY JOHN STRANGE WINTER.

IN QUARTERS.

Small Crown 8vo, Paper Covers, 1s. ; Cloth, 1s. 6d.

“‘In Quarters’ is one of those rattling tales of soldiers’ life which the public have learned to thoroughly appreciate.”—*The Graphic*, December 12, 1885.

“The author of ‘Bootles’ Baby’ gives us here another story of military life, which few have better described.”—*British Quarterly Review*, January 1886.

“His intimate knowledge of the inner life of barracks renders his tales of soldiers and their ways accurate, whilst they are, without exception, bright and amusing.”—*The Morning Post*, January 6, 1886.

“In the best sense of the word, human, and may be warmly commended.”—*Broad Arrow*, March 27, 1886.

“Will be received with pleasure by the entire English-speaking public. ‘In Quarters’ is simply a mighty shilling’s worth of amusement.”—*Sunday Times*, December 6, 1885.

ON MARCH.

Small Crown 8vo, Paper Covers, 1s. ; Cloth, 1s. 6d.

“This short story is characterised by Mr Winter’s customary truth in detail, humour, and pathos.”—*Academy*, April 17, 1886.

“By publishing ‘On March,’ Mr J. S. Winter has added another little gem to his well-known store of regimental sketches. The story is written with humour, and a deal of feeling.”—*Army and Navy Gazette*, March 13, 1886.

“A fascinating story, the reading of which will not be wasted time.”—*Birmingham Daily Post*, March 10, 1886.

“Certainly one of the happiest efforts that have emanated from Mr Winter’s prolific pen.”—*Galignani’s Messenger* (Paris), March 22, 1886.

“A bright and vivacious story, wholesome in tone and sentiment.”—*Nonconformist and Independent*, March 4, 1886.

“Another of the clever and fascinating stories by the author of ‘Bootles’ Baby,’ ‘Houp-la!’ and other works now familiar wherever the English language is read.”—*Scottish Reformer*, March 6, 1886.

“As a description of military men and manners, ‘On March’ will undoubtedly keep up the reputation its author has won.”—*Glasgow Herald*, July 27, 1886.

F. V. WHITE & Co., 31 Southampton Street, Strand.

WORKS BY JOHN STRANGE WINTER.

ARMY SOCIETY: LIFE IN A GARRISON TOWN.

In One Vol. Crown 8vo, Cloth, 6s., Boards, 2s.

‘This discursive story, dealing with life in a garrison town, is full of the pleasant ‘go’ and movement which has distinguished ‘Booties’ Baby,’ ‘Pluck,’ or in fact a majority of some half-dozen novelettes which the author has submitted to the eyes of railway book-stall patronisers.”—*Daily Telegraph*, June 24, 1886.

“The strength of the book lies in its sketches of life in a garrison town, which are undeniably clever. . . . It is pretty clear that Mr Winter draws from life.”—*St James’s Gazette*, July 17, 1886.

“This last work is named ‘Army Society,’ and very amusing the life-like sketches are. For go, fun, and originality, this new author has no rival in his particular line.”—*Birmingham Weekly Mercury*, June 12, 1886.

‘It is with much pleasure we welcome another bright, sparkling volume from the clever pen of J. S. Winter. ‘Army Society’ differs somewhat from the author’s other tales. As the title suggests, there is less actual story; but, having a rich store of characters to portray, the writer has done so with a strong, bold hand. The pictures of life in a garrison town are inimitable.”—*Literary World*, July 2, 1886.

“The ‘sidelights’ are particularly good—crisp, concise, to the point; they leave nothing to add, nothing to detract. Altogether the volume is full of interest, lively and humorous, and quite equal to the author’s other charming books.”—*Galignani’s Messenger (Paris)*, July 12, 1886.

“We know of no books of military life which can compare with Mr Winter’s for a combination of perfect realism and romantic flavour. . . . Who that has read ‘Booties’ Baby’ or ‘In Quarters’ does not feel a thrill of delighted anticipation at the announcement of a new book by the same pleasant and prolific author?”—*The County Gentleman*, August 7, 1886.

“‘Army Society’ is a series of smart sketches, full of fun and point, that may be accounted among some of the best works which John Strange Winter has yet written.”—*Whitehall Review*, June 25, 1886.

“The author is unsurpassed in our day for vivid descriptions of British army life in all its picturesque phases.”—*Daily Graphic*, N. Y., June 26, 1886.

“To military men it is unnecessary to indicate the characters likely to appear in such a story; but they will find on Mr Winter’s platform familiar types, playing their parts in a humorous manner, and leaving the audience at the end of the performance delighted with the skill of the author.”—*Army and Navy Magazine*, September 1886.

F. V WHITE & Co., 31 Southampton Street, Strand.

WORKS BY JOHN STRANGE WINTER.

GARRISON GOSSIP,

GATHERED IN BLANKHAMPTON.

(A SEQUEL TO "ARMY SOCIETY")

In One Vol., Crown 8vo, Cloth, 3s. 6d. ; also Picture Boards, 2s.

"'Garrison Gossip' may fairly rank with 'Cavalry Life,' and the various other books with which Mr Winter has so agreeably beguiled our leisure hours."—*Saturday Review*, April 2, 1887.

"The novel fully maintains the reputation which its author has been fortunate enough to gain in a special line of his own."—*Graphic*, May 21, 1887.

"Those who are acquainted with the previous works of John Strange Winter will expect to find 'Garrison Gossip' a lively story, and assuredly they will not be disappointed. The author wastes no time: he begins to be lively at once, and having begun he does not allow himself even a momentary lapse into flatness."—*Academy*, March 19, 1887.

"The pages sparkle with good things, as heretofore—good stories, manly men, harmless quips and cranks. Nothing is wanting of the old style, which is so irresistibly connected with all this author publishes."—*Whitehall Review*, March 17, 1887.

"Cleverly written, and true to life. It portrays in an admirable manner what its title promises, viz., the daily routine of a garrison town."—*Court Journal*, March 12, 1887.

"The story, as its title suggests, is made up of gossip; but if all gossip were as entertaining, the race of bores would be extinct."—*Scotsman*, March 7, 1887.

"It is an admirable sketch, not only of the military society which the title seems to promise, but also of the petty society of a cathedral city."—*Pictorial World*, April 14, 1887.

"There is some very powerful clerical drawing in 'Garrison Gossip'—the description of the Dean and the gossips among parsons being lifelike."—*The Lady*, April 21, 1887.

"The title exactly covers the purpose of the book; for, though no great central theme occupies the attention one is carried pleasantly through the gossip society of a garrison town."—*Army and Navy Gazette*, September 24, 1887.

"The 'Garrison Gossip' is very perfect of its kind and true to nature."—*Admiralty and Horse Guards Gazette*, August 27, 1887.

F V. WHITE & Co., 31 Southampton Street, Strand

WORKS BY JOHN STRANGE WINTER.

MIGNON'S SECRET.

Small Crown 8vo, Paper Covers, 1s.; Cloth, 1s. 6d.

"In 'Mignon's Secret' Mr Winter has supplied a continuation to the never-to-be-forgotten 'Bootles' Baby.' The story is gracefully and touchingly told."—*John Bull*, December 11, 1886.

"A clever little story. It is lightly touched, and has somewhat a tragic termination. It is easy to imagine we have not seen the last of 'Mignon' yet, by a long way."—*Punch*, December 4, 1886.

"It is doubtful whether the creator of 'Bootles,' 'Lucy,' 'Mignon,' and many other characters, has ever done better work than in 'Mignon's Secret.'"—*Broad Arrow*, December 4, 1886.

"The fun and the pathos are as fine as in former works, and the gracious sympathy with and delicate insight into child nature are of very uncommon quality."—*Birmingham Daily Post*, November 17, 1886.

"'Mignon's Secret' deals with children's character and their influence on men of the world in a manner which cannot be too highly spoken of."—*Sheffield Telegraph*, November 17, 1886.

THAT IMP!

Small Crown 8vo, Paper Covers, 1s.; Cloth, 1s. 6d.

"Barrack life is abandoned for the nonce, and the author of 'Bootles' Baby' introduces readers to a country home replete with every comfort, and containing men and women whose acquaintanceship we can only regret can never blossom into friendship."—*Whitehall Review*, April 28, 1887.

"This charming little book is bright and breezy, and has the ring of supreme truth about it."—*Vanity Fair*, May 21, 1887.

"It is clever throughout, and often powerful. It deals with army life, which it sketches with the vigour and ease now familiar in Mr Winter's bright and jolly pages. It may best be described as a capital little love story, well constructed and enlivened by plenty of clever character sketching. In outward form it resembles the kind of fiction known as shilling railway fiction; but it differs conspicuously from the generality of such books by its inner excellence."—*Scotsman*, May 2, 1887.

F. V WHITE & Co., 31 Southampton Street, Strand.

WORKS BY JOHN STRANGE WINTER.

MIGNON'S HUSBAND.

Small Crown 8vo, Paper Covers, 1s. ; Cloth, 1s. 6d.

"It is a capital love story, full of high spirits, and written in a dashing style that will charm the most melancholy of readers into hearty enjoyment of its fun."—*Scotsman*, October 17th, 1887.

"The name of John Strange Winter is enough to tell the reader that 'Mignon's Husband' is a brisk, lively tale, with a little pathos but more fun."—*Graphic*, December 10th, 1887.

"'Mignon's Husband' takes us back once again to all our old favourites of the Scarlet Lancers. . . The little volume is as good as all the early books which brought John Strange Winter's name as an author into prominence."—*Whitehall Review*, November 17th, 1887.

"There is less of camp life and more of society life in 'Mr Winter's' latest story than in any of its charming predecessors.

To say that the little story abounds in brightness and humour, accompanied by an undertone of genuine feeling, is another way of saying that it is written by 'John Strange Winter.'"—*County Gentleman*, November 12th, 1887.

"The plot is simple, but the working out is skilful and the interest is sustained to the last page."—*Public Opinion*, November 19th, 1887.

"There is a charming child in the book who bids fare to rival Mignon in public favour. All the children are delightfully sketched, but the tiny Madge is an exquisite creation, and forms a delightful addition to the author's picture gallery of pleasant faces."—*West London Advertiser*, October 29th, 1887.

"All the world knows and loves 'Bootles' Baby,' and will rush to read how she was wooed and wedded, which is charmingly told in this delightful little book."—*Life*, November 17th, 1887.

"The love-making passages are treated in John Strange Winter's inimitable style ; and the counter plot, in which the chief actors are a blustering country squire and an artificial young lady with an overwhelming anxiety as to the main chance, is vastly diverting. The dialogue is brisk and clever ; and the characterisation is as crisp as when 'Bootles' Baby' first took the reading public by storm."—*Bristol Observer*, October 29th, 1887.

"Another capital shilling novelette is 'Mignon's Husband,' which must be taken as the conclusion of that agreeable series of tales which began with the never-to-be-forgotten 'Bootles' Baby' . . . Where there is nothing to blame and everything to praise, it is difficult to be original in treating such a story, so we will confine ourselves to advising everybody to read and find out for him or herself who eventually had Mignon Ferrers to wife."—*Pictorial World*, November 17th, 1887.

F. V. WHITE & Co., 31 Southampton Street, Strand.

WORKS BY JOHN STRANGE WINTER.

A SIEGE BABY.

Library Edition, Two Vols., Cheap Edition, 1 vol., Cloth, 3s. 6d.

"The first, and perhaps the best, story is a sympathy-inviting tale of the Mutiny of 1857. . . Then we get upon lighter themes, and listen to the jovial nonsense of mess-table, and those wild episodes of army life the re-telling of which enlivens the tedium of guard-room and quarters. Few writers can set down these delightful follies with more effect or better local colouring

Either in jest or earnest this, like all its predecessors, is a pleasant book for the winter fireside and the arm-chair."—*Daily Telegraph*, November 11, 1887.

"Mr Winter is at his best in them. . . The Indian Mutiny gives him material for other sketches in the collection, and more than one of them gains its effect from the fine and fresh portrayal of the feelings called into being by interest in babies. Mr Winter may be said to have made babies peculiarly his own."—*Scotsman*, October 17, 1887.

"The story which gives its title to this new sheaf of stories by the popular author of 'Bootles' Baby' is a very touching and pathetic one . . . Amongst the other stories, the one entitled 'Out of the Mists' is, perhaps, the best written, although the tale of true love it embodies comes to a most melancholy ending."—*County Gentleman*, November 12, 1887.

"This collection of tales will enhance John Strange Winter's already high reputation as a writer of short stories. It is invidious to make distinctions where all are good, but I must make special mention of 'A Siege Baby,' which is a dramatic and pathetic tale of the Indian Mutiny."—*Lady's Pictorial*, October 29, 1887.

"Perhaps the most lively and amusing sketch is that entitled 'Miss Harker's Reputation,' wherein an utterly selfish and vulgar wretch recounts with an unblushing frankness his matrimonial experiences."—*Public Opinion*, November 11, 1887.

"The tales are all in the writer's best style, and no further praise could be accorded to them. Mr Winter devotes as much attention to his manner as he does to his matter, and what he writes bears more than one reading—a severe test now-a-days."—*Court Journal*, October 22, 1887.

"The account of Mr O'Sheeney's double discomfiture is excruciatingly funny. So are 'The Fool of the Regiment,' and 'Childhood's Memories.' . . . Take them all round, these are some of the best stories that have appeared for some time."—*Pictorial World*, November 17, 1887.

"The soldier stories of John Strange Winter are written with life and spirit, are full of amusement, with occasional touches of pathos, and portrays people who ought to live if they do not, they are so manly and womanly, so hearty, so human, and so alive."—*Mail & Express*, N. Y

F. V WHITE & Co., 31 Southampton Street, Strand.

"The PERFECTION of Dress Fabrics,"
says the *Court Journal*.

Dress
Fabrics

PRIESTLEY'S

FOR
GENTLEWOMEN.

TRADE MARK:
THE VARNISHED BOARD.

To be obtained from leading Drapers.

BRIGGS PRIESTLEY & SONS.

ALBION MILLS, LAISTERDYKE; and
DOLE MILLS, THORNTON, YORKS.

Pears' Soap

*I have found it
matchless for the
hands and complexion*

Queenie Patti

*Since using Pears'
Soap I have discarded
all others.*

Willie Langtry

*For preserving the Complexion, keeping the skin soft, free from
fadedness and roughness, and the hands in nice condition, it is
the finest Soap in the world*

M. Fortescue

Coughs

Colds

Asthma

Bronchitis

Toothache

Neuralgia

DR. J. COLLIS BROWNE'S

CHLORODYNE



ORIGINAL AND

IS
THE GREAT
SPECIFIC
FOR
CHOLERA,

C
C
A
P
COUGHS,
C COLDS,
STHMA,
B BRONCHITIS.

D
I
A
R
H
E
E
A
A
A
DIARRHŒA, DYSENTERY,
GENERAL BOARD OF HEALTH,
London, REPORT that it ACTS as a
CHARM, and is generally sufficient.
Dr. GIBBON, Army Medical Staff, Cal-
cutta, states: "2 DOSES COMPLETE-
LY CURED ME OF DIARRHŒA."
From Sykes & Co., Pharmaceutical
Chemists, Simla, Jan. 5, 1889.

D
E
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D
R
J
C
O
L
L
I
S
B
R
O
W
N
E
'
S
C
H
L
O
R
O
D
Y
N
E
-
D

A WONDERFUL MEDICINE

BEECHAM'S PILLS

BEECHAM'S PILLS
BEECHAM'S PILLS
BEECHAM'S PILLS
BEECHAM'S PILLS
BEECHAM'S PILLS
BEECHAM'S PILLS
BEECHAM'S PILLS
BEECHAM'S PILLS
BEECHAM'S PILLS
BEECHAM'S PILLS
BEECHAM'S PILLS
BEECHAM'S PILLS
BEECHAM'S PILLS
BEECHAM'S PILLS
BEECHAM'S PILLS
BEECHAM'S PILLS

Are universally admitted to be worth a Guinea a Box for Bilious and Nervous Disorders, such as wind and pain in the Stomach, Sick Headache, Giddiness, Fulness and Swelling after Meals, Dizziness and Drowsiness, Cold Chills, Flushings of Heat, Loss of Appetite, Shortness of Breath, Costiveness, Scurvy, Blisters on the Skin, Disturbed Sleep, Frightful Dreams, and all Nervous and Trembling Sensations, &c. The First Dose will Give Relief in Twenty Minutes. This is no fiction, for they have done it in countless cases. Every sufferer is earnestly invited to try one Box of these Pills, and they will be acknowledged to be

Worth a GUINEA a Box.

For Females of all ages these Pills are invaluable, as a few doses of them carry off all humours, *open* all obstructions, and bring about all that is required. No female should be without them. There is no medicine to be found to equal **BEECHAM'S PILLS** for removing any obstruction or irregularity of the system. If taken according to the directions given with each Box, they will soon restore females of all ages to sound and robust health. This has been proved by thousands who have tried them and found the benefits which are ensured by their use.

For a Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion, and all disorders of the liver, they act like magic, and a few doses will be found to work wonders upon the most important organs in the human machine. They strengthen the whole muscular system, restore the long lost complexion, bring back the keen edge of appetite, and arouse into action, with the rosebud of health, the whole physical energy of the human frame. These are facts testified continually by members of all classes of society; and one of the best guarantees to the nervous and debilitated is **BEECHAM'S PILLS** have the largest sale of any patent medicine in the world.

**FULL DIRECTIONS ARE GIVEN
WITH EACH BOX.**

*Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicines
Dealers everywhere, in Boxes at 1s. 1½d.
and 2s. 9d. each.*

